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The Polymorphous Pesah

Ritual Between Origins and Reenactment

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Despite points of critical clarity in the scholarly tradition, the biblical account of Exodus 12 continues to be treated as a sufficiently coherent story of origins that relates how the Passover festival and the *pesah* ritual were established and what makes all subsequent performances reenactments. This article surveys ancient literature presenting or invoking the *pesah*, from its very first representation in biblical literature up to the debates about it in the Hellenistic and Roman periods, to show that the *pesah* is an instance of “repetition without origin” and one that problematizes the very notion of reenactment. The article demonstrates that successive authors and editors do not provide any clear sense of how the *pesah* was done in their time or what the general tradition was as to its origins; the original version was itself already fragmentary and unworkable; subsequent work to recast and re-present it is always interpretive and re-interpretive in nature, is conditioned by the argument of the larger literary work, and advances contradictory views. Because the early sources construct the *pesah* in so many opposing ways, subsequent readers had unusual liberty to interpret and retold this important practice in whatever shape best suited their needs and understanding. The survey illustrates how completely the *pesah* foils the attempt to write its history both as a practice and as a literary tradition, but also how it generated a long and rich history of creative thought around itself.

Introduction

A memorable series of scenes in Cecile B. DeMille’s 1956 film *The Ten Commandments* shows the plague of the firstborn as a radioactive green fog creeping in the streets and underneath doors, bringing death upon the Egyptians. In the sequence, Moses appears sitting with his family in their little house in Goshen, and as they hear the cries of terror around them they hold what the trained ear recognizes to be a traditional Jewish Passover *seder*. The conversation recapitulates the traditional *seder*-script, the *Haggadah*. Aaron’s son Eleazar asks, “Why do we eat unleavened bread with bitter herbs, my uncle?” and Moses replies, “The herbs remind us of the bitterness of our captivity.”

This cinematic depiction of the last night in Egypt, in which the ritual ostensibly instituted to commemorate the exodus is performed before the exodus itself actually takes place, vividly captures the common understanding of Passover – or *Pesah* or the *pesah* – as replication of the activities performed by the Israelites when they left Egypt. The filmmakers projected the ritual they knew onto the mythical past with the common notion that the ritual is fun-

¹ This article comes out of a joint presentation at the Midwest Ancient Judaism Colloquium on “Ancient Jewish Imaginaries,” hosted by the Frankel Center for Judaic Studies at the University of Michigan, April 7–8, 2014.

damentally a reenactment: a pronounced attempt to repeat past events in a detailed manner, so as to make the event itself reappear in the present.² Paul Connerton, a pioneer of collective memory studies, regards Passover as the paradigmatic example of a “distinctive class of rites which have an explicitly backward-looking and calendrical character... [which] do not simply imply continuity with the past but explicitly claim such continuity.”³ Yosef Hayim Yerushalmi in his monumental study of Jewish memory, *Zakhor*, repeatedly refers to Passover as an illustration for his claim that Jews, following the biblical pattern, activate historical memory distinctly through ritual and repetition rather than through archival-like remembrance.⁴

In this framework, the narrative at Exod 12 is read as *a story of origins*, which delineates how the first *pesah* was celebrated and thereby sets the guidelines for its future reproductions.⁵ The text at Exod 12 has both Yahweh and Moses saying that the *pesah* day and its activities should be commemorated and repeated ever after (vv. 14, 24–27). It ties together specificity (“do this thing tonight”) with repetition (“do the same thing again and again”). Accordingly, when later authors produce their own account of the “repetition” – that is, of *pesah* observance in later times – they revert to Exod 12 as the origin story and describe the repetition in terms of the origin. In this alleged correspondence between the origin and the replications, as Joseph Tabory noted in his comprehensive review of the Passover tradition, lies the enduring mythical weight of the rituals associated with the *pesah*, through which it is constructed as a perpetual occurrence.⁶

However, Julius Wellhausen put the matter in sharper terms, highlighting the strange, reversed and recursive dimension accorded the *pesah* in Exod 12:

This feast, which precisely on account of its eminently historical character is here regarded as by far the most important of all, is much more than the mere commemoration of a divine act of salvation, it is itself a saving deed. It is not *because* Jehovah smote the firstborn of Egypt that the passover is afterwards instituted; on the contrary, it is instituted beforehand, at the moment of the exodus, *in order that* the firstborn of Is-

2 See I. Scheffler, *Symbolic Worlds: Art, Science, Language, Ritual* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 147–59.

3 P. Connerton, *How Societies Remember* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989), 45. See also M. Brettler, “Memory in Ancient Israel,” in *Memory and History in Christianity and Judaism* (ed. M. Signer; Notre Dame: Notre Dame University Press, 2001), 1–17; J. Assmann, *Religion and Cultural Memory: Ten Studies* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2006), 18.

4 Y. H. Yerushalmi, *Zakhor: Jewish History and Jewish Memory* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1982 [1996]), 11, 40–44, and *passim*.

5 See B. S. Childs, *The Book of Exodus* (Old Testament Library; Louisville, Ky.: Westminster John Knox Press, 1974 [2004]), 204–06; B. M. Bokser, *The Origins of the Seder: The Passover Rite and Early Rabbinic Judaism* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1984), 84–89; D. Bergant, “An Anthropological Approach to Biblical Interpretation: The Passover Supper in Exodus 12:1–20 as a Case Study,” *Semeia* 67 (1994): 43–62, 55.

6 J. Tabory, *The Passover Ritual Throughout the Generations* (Tel Aviv: Hakkibutz Hameuhad, 1996), 14 (Hebrew).

rael may be spared. Thus not merely is a historical motive assigned for the custom; its beginning is itself raised to the dignity of a historical fact upon which the feast rests.⁷

The filmmakers of the *The Ten Commandments* who used contemporary forms to cast the original past took this reversal one step further, implying in effect that the *seder*-script recapitulates the original (and highly implausible) table-talk. But Wellhausen problematized the reversal and its recursive character as well, arguing that the retrojection of the *pesah* masked its true character as a temple sacrifice, which would be totally inappropriate to the setting in Egypt.⁸

Wellhausen's insights isolate the origin-story at Exod 12 both from any preceding historical event and from any subsequent ritual reenactment. To this degree, ritual reenactment of the *pesah* represents an ancient example of what Tomoko Masuzawa termed "repetition without origin."⁹ In Wellhausen's forceful remarks, the idea of reenactment is a willful discursive overlay to a set of fragmented continuities, a lens to frame discordant elements as foreground and background. But even Wellhausen did not overcome the pull to coherence and reconstruction, identifying elements and motifs in Exod 12 and related texts as traditions, treating other texts as reflective of practice, and constructing of them a linear history, and scholarship since has continued in that vein.¹⁰

The study below traces the multiple ruptures that characterize the entire literary tradition of the *pesah*, both within the origin-story itself and between it and its various biblical and post-biblical retellings and tellings of reenactments. It emphasizes that the ruptures are distinctly literary in nature, and it uncovers their underlying hermeneutics.

On its own terms, the origin-story at Exod 12 does not present or contain a complete or coherent account of the original *pesah*, but rather a mashup of

7 J. Wellhausen, *Prolegomena to the History of Ancient Israel* (trans. J. Sutherland Black and A. Menzies; Edinburgh: Adam & Charles Black, 1885; repr. Cleveland: World Publishing, 1957 [1965]), 102, relatedly, 87–88.

8 *Ibid.*, 102 n. 1; M. Haran, *Temples and Temple Service in Ancient Israel* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1978; repr. Winona Lake, Ind.: Eisenbrauns, 1995), 341–48.

9 T. Masuzawa, *In Search of Dreamtime: The Quest for the Origin of Religion* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1993), 13–33. On the basis of Walter Benjamin's seminal piece "The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction" (in H. Arendt, ed., *Illuminations* [New York: Schocken, 1969]), which discusses photography as an art-form that forces us to relinquish the notion of originality altogether, since there are only copies, Masuzawa notes how central the concept of and quest for origins has been in the study of religion since its inception, and proposes that scholars may benefit from models of investigation that are liberated from the quest for a clear and ultimate reference point.

10 Wellhausen, *Prolegomena*, 87–93; J. B. Segal, *The Hebrew Passover: From the Earliest Times to A. D. 70* (London and New York: Oxford University Press, 1963); Haran, *Temples*, 317–48; B. M. Levinson, *Deuteronomy and the Hermeneutics of Legal Innovation* (New York: Oxford, 1997), 53–79, esp. 57–62; T. Proscic, *The Development and Symbolism of Passover Until 70 CE* (London and New York: T & T Clark, 2004); C. Leonhard, *The Jewish Pesach and the Origins of the Christian Easter: Open Questions in Current Research* (Studia Judaica 35; Berlin and New York: de Gruyter, 2006), 62–70, despite methodological clarity regarding prior theories, 56–61.

partial elements inserted one into the other that pull in contrary directions and cancel each other out. The text itself is a variety of “repetition without origin.” An incomplete, disjunctive core is serially reframed and becomes a tangle of contradictory assertions about what transpired that night, what rules were applied, what they effected or meant, what to perpetuate and how. The lack of clear origin and coherence continues to surface in and facilitate other interpretive and adaptive re-presentations, both in the Bible and outside it. The notion of a required annual commemoration persists, but the precise activity, its relation to the original, its meaning in the audience’s present, and the categories to which it belongs are all recast time and again over centuries. The different views do not develop in a linear fashion, but change in no particular order, with the interests of each individual author. Interpretive and adaptive in nature, they do not provide a clear sense of how the *pesah* was practiced in any given author’s time or of a general tradition regarding its origins.

The critical survey below of ancient texts about the *pesah* aims to detail: the insufficiency of the first *pesah* text as an origin-story; the complexities and contradictions created by hermeneutical attempts to engage the first and subsequent forms of that text; the surprisingly broad range of ideas about the *pesah* attested across the ancient texts; and the creative application of the *pesah* by so many of those authors to their own conditions. The sum total demonstrates just how fraught is the concept itself of reenactment, and how literary its character in the early history of the *pesah*: if there is any stable *pesah* tradition, it is to write about and invoke “the *pesah*.”¹¹

The survey proceeds in three stages and its style shifts with the nature of the sources. The first stage closely analyzes the narrative texts in the Torah that present the origins of the *pesah* paradigmatically and prescriptively, texts identified by critical scholars as part of the *Priestly History*. The analysis distinguishes different stages of the texts, describes their hermeneutic relationships, and highlights their conflicting views. The patient work excavating the texts is crucial to deconstructing what seems sufficiently straightforward and to exposing the fragments and their stark conflicts. This stage builds closely upon existing source-critical works, but goes beyond them: (1) synthesizing the full range of literary compositeness and contrary ideas in a single dialectical account focused on reenactment *per se*; (2) distinguishing sharply between types of reenactment – anxiety in the home *versus* gratitude at the tabernacle;

11 See Prosc, *The Development and Symbolism*, 75–82. Much has been made of two tantalizing letters related to the *pesah* in fifth cent. B.C.E. Elephantine, but they offer precious little. Around 475 B.C.E., a domestic-affairs letter to Hoshai of Elephantine, evidently from her husband on the nearby island of Syene, includes the isolated request, “notify me when you will do the *pesah*.” A letter dated to 419 B.C.E. from Hananiah, evidently a Jewish official in the Egyptian satrapy, to Yedaniah and his military cohort at Elephantine instructs them in observances; what is preserved recalls distinctly the leaven-free week of flatbread of Exod 12 – but not the *pesah*. Typical, optimistic reconstructions assume too much, begging the question. See J. M. Lindenberger, *Ancient Aramaic and Hebrew Letters* (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1994), 37–38, 44, 53–54, 56–58.

(3) tracing how each addition connects and conflicts with the *Priestly History*; and (4) establishing decisive disjuncture from real practice.

The second stage analyzes the two accounts of *pesah* celebration in Jerusalem in the book of *Chronicles*. This composition is far more self-contained and continuous than the Torah. Furthermore, it does not narrate a set of prescriptions about the *pesah* or directly convey assumptions about its correct form and meaning. Rather, it deploys the *pesah* for the purposes of the larger national history. These circumstances allow a simpler presentation of *Chronicles*' ideas about the *pesah* and its hermeneutical engagement with prior works within the Bible.

The third stage, which discusses texts from the Hellenistic and Roman periods, does not offer close literary analysis of the texts as such but rather focuses on notable recurring themes. All the texts examined have a history of formation and philological intricacies, but these are not as germane to their presentation of the *pesah*. Accordingly, we restrict our analysis to the question of how various authors of post-biblical works tackle the particular dualities and ambiguities that we identified in the biblical sources.

The study does not cover all biblical or early post-biblical references to the *pesah*, but rather examines the works that best illustrate the range of interpretations and adaptations of it; omitted texts, like Deut 16:1–8 and Ezekiel the Tragedian's *Exagoge*, are felt not to expand or deepen the study phenomenologically or conceptually. Mindful of the study's size and scope, we focus on a few central themes and on the works that feature them in the most significant and developed ways. Accordingly, we restrict our discussion of rabbinic sources to early, tannaitic materials, which provide the critical conceptual infrastructure and halakic language for later, amoraic rabbinic literature, and we discuss New Testament sources without venturing into the development of the *pesah* motif in subsequent early Christian literature.¹²

The study features a collaboration between a scholar of the Hebrew Bible and a scholar of Early Judaism. This collaboration is not simply the means by which the study is effected; it also serves its message. Problematizing the paradigm of "origin" and "repetition" requires examining together, with due expertise, the texts held to be foundational and the works that ostensibly recapitulate them. The effect of tracing the persistent attention to and extension of the same disjunctures, multivalence, and opposed hermeneutical choices over an extended period of time and across a wide assortment of texts is to dismantle a misguided sense of coherence and continuity often projected onto the notion of *pesah* as a stable tradition. More sharply, it belies the distinction between periodized fields of knowledge as historical foils for each other: between biblical and post-biblical or Rabbinic, as if biblical materials were

12 For an excellent survey of early Christian writings on *pesah/Pascha* from the second and third centuries C. E., see R. A. Clements, *Peri Pascha: Passover and the Displacement of Jewish Interpretation within Origen's Exegesis* (Ph. D. diss., Harvard University, 1997).

packaged into a coherent complex for post-biblical authors to engage and transform, or as if biblical materials were an unruly mess that later texts came along to sort out. The whole here – the fraught and hermeneutical nature of re-enactment across the entire body of ancient literature about the *pesah* – could not be achieved without the sum of these parts and the distinct questions and methods appropriate to their analysis.¹³

Part I: The Priestly History

Exodus 12:1–28

Discussion of the *pesah* begins with the narrative in the Torah of Yahweh's liberation of Israel from Egypt. In preparing his final blow against Egypt, Yahweh instructs Moses and Aaron regarding the *pesah*, a procedure that will keep Israel safe. Oddly, the narrator never depicts Israel carrying out the instructions, only states in summary fashion that they did as Yahweh instructed. Modern scholars understand the narrative as a back-projection that does not provide the correct account of the origins of the *pesah* or reflect its original meaning. To reconstruct the original context, contours, and meaning, they focus chiefly on the specific instructions Yahweh gave Moses and Aaron and infer the type of society or segment within society appropriate to such instructions, the function of the procedure ("rite") within the society, and its meaning to the society. Nonetheless, still mindful of the literary frame, scholars have been led by the disjointed state of the narrative to view it as a patchwork, with alternate configurations and meanings of the *pesah* spliced together. They have long debated which represents the original, whether the alternates react directly to each other, how they might qualify each other, and what *realia* or ideas each represents.¹⁴

A full-scale, careful analysis of the core text about the *pesah*, at Exod 12:1–28, has been conducted by Shimon Gesundheit. By prioritizing lines of continuous discourse rather than thematic alignments, his analysis leads sharply away from the better-known theories of shepherds' blood rites and farmers' grain celebrations.¹⁵ As he argues it, the text includes several sets of additions and changes, and all the stages connect differently with the narrative flow and the conceptual world of the *Priestly History*, one of the works that make up the

13 For a powerful statement about the importance of collaboration, see R. S. Boustán, O. Kosansky, and M. Rustow, "Introduction: Anthropology, History, and the Remaking of Jewish Studies," in *Jewish Studies at the Crossroads of Anthropology and History: Authority, Diaspora, Tradition* (ed. R. S. Boustán, O. Kosansky, and M. Rustow; Philadelphia: The University of Pennsylvania Press, 2011), 1–28.

14 For the state of confusion, see C. Houtman, *Exodus* (4 vols.; Leuven: Peeters, 1993–2002), 2.146–66.

15 S. Gesundheit, *Three Times a Year: Studies on Festival Legislation in the Pentateuch* (FAT 82; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2012), 44–95.

Torah, one that promotes institutionalized divine presence, portrays it comprehensively, and considers the cosmos generally and Israel in particular from that perspective. One of the distinctive and startling aspects of this history is that at the same time that it has immense thematic coherence and historiographical consistency, it also has clear signs both that its author incorporated preexisting written materials and that the work was supplemented serially by others, as in the case of the *pesah*.¹⁶

The base-text consists of the narrator's framing speech, which situates the event, and Yahweh's speech to Moses and Aaron, specifically where he refers to Israel indirectly in the third person. It comprises vv. 1, 3, 6b–8, 28.¹⁷

And Yahweh said to Moses and Aaron in the land of Egypt as follows < > "Speak to the entire Israelite congregation as follows, on the tenth of this month, they should take each a lamb per household, a lamb per house, < > and the entire assembly of the Israelite congregation should slaughter it in the evening, and take from the blood and put it on the two doorposts and on the lintel of the houses in which they will be eating it, and eat the meat that night; flame-broiled – with flatbread – together with bitter herbs shall they eat it." < > And the Israelites went and did just as Yahweh instructed Moses and Aaron; so indeed did they do.

At this stage, Yahweh reveals very little about the *pesah*. He prescribes the following procedure: on the tenth of the month in which their conversation takes place – the narrative does not specify which month and the real-life audience who already has a *pesah* tradition must make the link – each Israelite household will slaughter a lamb in the evening, smear its blood on the entrance to the house, and eat its roasted meat inside the house. Many details are ambiguous or gapped: (1) where to slaughter the animal, in the doorway or in the courtyard; (2) which to do first, the roasting or the smearing; (3) by what means and method to smear; and (4) which doorway to smear, that of the house and or that of the courtyard. The way the author formulated the text allows the inference that the Israelites should slaughter the animal in the courtyard, catch its blood in a bowl, roast the animal completely, then enter the house with the bowl of blood and the roasted meat, smear the entrance with the blood and eat the meat – a sequence excluded by subsequent editors and tradition.

The text says nothing of the procedure's function or potency. In Gesundheit's main analysis, the base-text did not even include the term *pesah*. In a

16 It is standard to date the *Priestly History* to the "Exilic/Neo-Babylonian" or "Post-Exilic/Persian" period, in the sixth-fifth cents. B. C. E., but the grounds for that date have substantially eroded, and there are good grounds for locating the first edition, as it were, in the seventh cent. B. C. E. At present, there is no up-to-date comprehensive description of the *Priestly History*. For bibliographical guidance, see J. Stackert, "Priestly/Holiness Codes," at *Oxford Bibliographies Online* [www.oxfordbibliographies.com].

17 Verse 28, in which the narrator says the Israelites followed the instructions, matches vv. 1 + 3a and should be attributed together with them (compare Gesundheit, *Three Times a Year*, 61–66). Translation of all biblical text by S. Chavel.

note, Gesundheit affirms the possibility that Yahweh's description of the procedure as "a *pesah* of/for/by Yahweh," now at 12:11, originally concluded the instructions,¹⁸ but even so, the statement does not clarify matters, because the term *pesah* is itself multivalent. If it denotes a defensive procedure,¹⁹ Yahweh does not specify the nature of the threat or the mechanism for thwarting it. If the term refers to a passing over,²⁰ the context for it seems even more obscure.

The base-text establishes the narrative setting: Yahweh gave the instructions to Moses and Aaron in Egypt. It bears stylistic and motivic signs specifically of the *Priestly History* rather than any of the other works in the Torah. But it does not feature any of the distinctive aspects of the priestly story of Israel's liberation through Yahweh's smiting of Egypt and it does not explicitly advance it. Indeed, it begins rather disjunctively, by unnecessarily repeating the location, "in the land of Egypt." The base-text, then, has literary uniformity and the hallmarks of a particular historiographical work, but reads like a fragment within it.

In short, what can be isolated by continuity of discourse as the base-text of what has traditionally served as the core text of the *pesah* does not clearly detail the traditionally familiar observance, does not link up in any specific, substantive way with the story of Israel's liberation from Egypt, and may not even have included the signal term *pesah*. For the critical historian and the scholar of religion, the earliest tradition of the *pesah* is a nebulous bit of lore in a disconnected piece of text. The first set of additions made to the base-text shows an ancient reader likewise to have found it wanting on these very grounds.

The first set of additions to the base-text consists of three blocs inserted at different points, vv. 4–6a, 9–11, and 22–24. These introduce more speech by Yahweh, but formulated as direct address to the Israelites. The combined text comprises vv. 1, 3–11, 22–24, 28.²¹

And Yahweh said to Moses and Aaron in the land of Egypt as follows, < > "Speak to the entire Israelite congregation as follows, on the tenth of this month, they should take each one a lamb per household, a lamb per house.

And if a household should not suffice for a lamb, then he and the neighbor nearest his house should take (together) in accounting for the (number of) people, each per

18 See Gesundheit, *Three Times a Year*, 72–73, esp. 72 n. 64.

19 See Isa 31:5 "Like birds beating their wings so does Yahweh-of-Legions shield (יגן) Jerusalem, shielding (גנון) till saved (והציל), protecting (פסח) till rescued (והמליט)." The bird beats its wings in a way that both shields the young and wards off the attacker; so too Yahweh will shield the people of Jerusalem where they are and ward off the attacker. The preceding image in v. 4 makes this sense clear. For linguistic analysis of the root, see E. Otto, "*pāsaḥ/pesah*," in *Theological Dictionary of the Old Testament* (eds. G. J. Botterweck et al.; trans. J. T. Willis; 15 vols.; Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 1975–2006), 12.2–7. For literary analysis of Isa 31:5, see J. Blenkinsopp, *Isaiah 1–39* (AB 19; New Haven: Yale University Press, 2000), 427–28.

20 See, e. g., 1 Kgs 18:21.

21 Verses 25–27a and 27b are separate additions; see Gesundheit, *Three Times a Year*, 64 n. 44, 65–67.

his portion shall you account (pl.) per lamb. You shall have a one-year old, male, perfectly healthy lamb; from sheep or goats shall you take (it). And it shall be something you guard until the fourteenth day of this month.

And the entire assembly of the Israelite congregation should slaughter it in the evening, and take from the blood and put it on the two doorposts and on the lintel of the houses in which they will be eating it, and eat the meat that night; flame-broiled – with flatbread – together with bitter herbs shall they eat it.

Do not eat (pl.) it raw or cooked in water, rather flame-broiled, its head together with its flanks and insides. And you shall not leave any of it over by morning, and what is left of it by morning, by fire you shall burn it. And this is how you should eat it: your loins girded, your shoes on your feet, and your stick in your hand; and you should eat it haste.

It is a *pesaḥ* of/for/by Yahweh.

And you (pl.) shall take a hyssop-bundle and dip it in the blood that is on the threshold, and dab the lintel and the two doorposts with the blood that is on the threshold; as for you – you shall not go, anyone, through the doorway of the house until morning. When Yahweh will pass to strike Egypt then he will see the blood on the lintel and on the two doorposts, and Yahweh will skip over/shield the doorway, and he will not allow the Destroyer to enter your houses to strike. And you shall keep this procedure as a rule for you and your descendants in perpetuity.”

And the Israelites went and did just as Yahweh instructed Moses and Aaron; so indeed did they do.

The added material amplified the base-text in two ways. It engaged the original set of instructions hermeneutically, quantifying, qualifying, extending, applying, and explaining; and it provided fuller and more explicit links to the priestly narrative, establishing the instructions as preparations designed specifically for the circumstances of the attack in Egypt. At the same time, whereas the base-text has Yahweh address Moses directly and speaks of the Israelites in the third person, the additions have Yahweh address Israel directly in the second person plural, which makes for discontinuous reading. In the midst of his speech issuing instructions to Moses, Yahweh breaks off to offer commentary to the Israelites, who are not present to hear it.²²

According to the enriching and integrating additions, Yahweh will be carrying, accompanying, or releasing a devastating force throughout Egypt all night long (v. 23). Therefore, none should exit their home during that time (v. 22b). Accordingly, the principle of a lamb per house in the base-text means one single complete lamb for each home: all parties must be prearranged (v. 4),

22 Gesundheit identifies additional instances in which a base-text that has Yahweh speaking of Israel in the third-person is supplemented by material in which Yahweh addresses Israel in the second (*ibid.*, 52 n. 12); he allows that such a text can have a single author, but reasons that as the conceptual gap between the two segments grows the likelihood diminishes (*ibid.*, 48 n. 11). Yahweh referring to himself in the third person (vv. 22–24) is not a literary problem entailing a source-critical solution.

so that no underfed families seek more meat during the night and no one distribute their extra. The animal's blood, smeared on the door-frame, will serve crucially to signal Yahweh to protect the Israelite houses and their inhabitants from the destructive agent (vv. 22a, 23).²³

In terms of the specifics – the mechanics, location, and sequence – Yahweh's speech indicates that the Israelites should slaughter the animal on the threshold of the house, dip a brush into its blood, and smear the other three points of the entrance (v. 22a). This configuration suggests that the smearing should occur immediately after the slaughtering – even that the slaughter serves to facilitate the smearing – and that the roasting will begin after the smearing. Moreover, having the four points of the entrance smeared, mildly emphasized by the care taken to repeat each point by its precise term (“threshold,” “lintel,” “the two doorposts,” already in v. 7), also suggests a sealant, with the implication that from its creation – in the evening (v. 6b) – no Israelite should pass through it. Namely, the Israelites would roast the animals on the protected side of the entrance. Indeed, whatever the idea behind roasting the animal in the base-text (v. 8), the added requirements that it should be roasted whole (v. 9)²⁴ and totally consumed by morning (v. 10) present the roasting as designed to keep the Israelites closely around the animal and within the protected domain throughout the night.²⁵ As a sealant, the procedure also conjures the notion that the blood has potency and itself repels or neutralizes the destructive force; this notion of the blood's potency competes with the present form of v. 23, in which Yahweh will himself defend the entrance, and suggests that originally the text read differently: when the destroying agent traverses the land, the blood on the Israelite doorways will prevent it from entering their houses.²⁶

At this point, the disjuncture with *realia* – home-layout and space-usage – and a practiced *pesah* is felt acutely. The notion of the blood as potent sealant or repellant makes the most sense for the doorway of a fully enclosed and covered house. In this case, Yahweh's instructions would have the Israelites slaughtering the animal and roasting it whole inside their houses. Such an irregular procedure would be odd for an author in Iron II Israel-Judea to con-

23 The verb ופסח in v. 23 refers to defending. The meaning “skip, pass over” does not suit an entrance (contrast Exod 12:13 ופסחתי עלכם “I will pass over you”), and “passing by” has a different verb altogether, ע-ב-ר. For a comparable image of Yahweh restraining a destructive force when it comes to a favored site, with similar confusion over the personification and agency of the force, see 2 Sam 24:15–16. Gesundheit notes the direct adaptation in Ezek 9:4–6 (*Three Times a Year*, 70 n. 57). More distantly, see 2 Kgs 19:32–35.

24 Compare e.g. Exod 29:16–18.

25 The author did not have Yahweh stipulate anything regarding the hair and skin – whether or not to remove them – or regarding inedible or rarely eaten parts.

26 As a visual signal to the deity, anything less than the blood in the entire doorway would suffice, as in Ezek 9:1–11. On the meaning of Exod 12:23, see the discussion in Gesundheit, *Three Times a Year*, 67–73.

coct for life in Egypt²⁷ – and odder still if an Iron II audience should replicate it in real life. If, alternatively, the author had in mind houses with internal open spaces for cooking, or smearing the courtyard entrance and roasting in the courtyard, then sealing the doorway should not suffice.²⁸ So far, archaeological finds do not allow a clear determination,²⁹ but *both* possibilities yield a problematic text: either the story calls attention to the gap between Yahweh's procedure and the circumstances for which he designs it, or else it calls attention to the gap between the procedure and its realistic or meaningful repetition by subsequent generations. Both situations defy the coherence expected for a rite described in text and the correspondence expected between text and the real world.

Other instructions also go beyond the circumstances presented as having required them. The age, sex, species, and state of the animal killed (v. 5), the warning not to leave over any of the meat (v. 10), and watching over the animal until the fourteenth (v. 6a) – these particulars have no relevance for the situation established by the narrative in which Yahweh stipulates them. The effect is doubly troubling: Taken as a whole, the list exacerbates the sense that

- 27 It is too tenuous a possibility that the author, in Iron II Israel-Judea, knew about slave-laborers' homes in New Kingdom Egypt. But for the range of non-royal homes, see A. Badawy, *A History of Egyptian Architecture*, Volume 3: *The Empire (the New Kingdom) from the Eighteenth Dynasty to the End of the Twentieth Dynasty 1580–1085 B. C.* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1968), 92–119; B. J. Kemp, *Ancient Egypt: Anatomy of a Civilization* (2d ed.; London: Routledge, 2006), 216–17, 326–29; for aspects that differ from typical houses in ancient Israel-Judea, see G. Pinch, "Private Life in Ancient Egypt," in *Civilizations of the Ancient Near East* (ed. J. M. Sasson; 2 vols.; Peabody, Mass.: Hendrickson, 2000), 1.363–67; W. Stevenson Smith, *The Art and Architecture of Ancient Egypt* (3d ed.; rev. W. K. Simson; New Haven: Yale University Press, 1998), 191; D. Arnold, *The Encyclopedia of Ancient Egyptian Architecture* (eds. N. and H. Strudwick; trans. S. H. Gardiner and H. Strudwick; Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2003), 110–12. But what house-type of Iron II Israel-Judea did the author have in mind: The most prevalent? Urban or rural? The highest-profile type or what might be expected for slaves?
- 28 There are plentiful signs of food-heating – hearths, fire-pits, ovens, cooking pots, and the like – in the ground-floor multiple-utility room of houses in Iron Age southern Levant, as well as evidence that animals were kept in other ground-floor rooms (R. Albertz and R. Schmidt, *Family and Household Religion in Ancient Israel and the Levant* [Winona Lake, Ind.: Eisenbrauns, 2012], 224–27), but these do not betoken roasting an animal whole there.
- 29 For data, discussion, and debate on the layout and usage of houses, homes, and home-clusters, see L. Stager, "The Archaeology of the Family in Ancient Israel," *BASOR* 260 (1985): 1–35; E. Netzer, "Domestic Architecture in the Iron Age," and Z. Herzog, "Settlement and Fortification Planning in the Iron Age," in *The Architecture of Ancient Israel: From the Prehistoric to the Persian Periods* (eds. A. Kempinski and R. Reich; Jerusalem: Israel Exploration Society, 1992), 193–201, 231–65; A. Faust, *The Archaeology of Israelite Society in Iron Age II* (trans. and rev. R. Ludlum; Winona Lake, Ind.: Eisenbrauns, 2012), 213–16 and throughout; Albertz and Schmidt, *Family and Household Religion*, 26–41; D. A. Frese, "Chambered Gatehouses in the Iron II Southern Levant: Their Architecture and Function," *Levant* 47 (2015), 75–92, at 82–83. Thanks to Avraham Faust and to David Schloen, both of whom graciously entertained questions and offered clarifications of the published data and its interpretation.

the text is loosely indexed to a specific custom or set of norms known by the author – which troubles one's sense of textual purpose and integrity. When viewed in the larger context of the *Priestly History*, the list could indicate that the author included Yahweh's predilections and interests elsewhere in the work, without intending to signal specific categorical connections and alignments outside it – which troubles one's sense of how earnest and normative the author meant it to be.³⁰

The added material does establish a logical and memorial link between the event and subsequent practice, and it does so linguistically. It has Yahweh describe his defense of the Israelites with the verb *p-s-h* “to protect” (v. 23), which concretizes his earlier statement, “it is Yahweh's *pesah*” (v. 11). Moreover, the precise formulation of that statement, “it is the *pesah* *l*-Yahweh,” contains a syntactical ambiguity that the addition resolves (which subsequent additions contradict). Marking the relationship between “the *pesah*” and “Yahweh” is the preposition *l*-, which can signal possession/source (“of”), purpose/recipient (“for”), or means (“by”). If the blood works by alerting Yahweh to the presence of an Israelite house, as the text reads now, then the clause expresses Yahweh's direct intervention: “it (the procedure) is the protection *by* Yahweh.” If the addition originally had the blood warding off the agent of destruction directly, as scholars surmise, then the clause would express that Yahweh revealed this power that it has: “it is the protection *of* Yahweh.” The alliteration between the root denoting protection, *p-s-h* (vv. 11, 23), and the repeated noun denoting the entryway upon which that protection hinges, *p-t-h* (vv. 22, 23), reinforces the logic of the whole: it is an entrance-protective procedure.³¹

Yahweh does not indicate the meat or its consumption to have any intrinsic significance. Contextually, the meal keeps the people engaged safely inside. With a destructive force raging outside and the requirement to be ready for departure, the mood is not exclusively or even primarily festive, but one of anxiety. Alliteration again does the underscoring – between *p-s-h* and *h-p-z* “hurriedly, anxiously” (v. 11).³² Yahweh's final instruction that the Israelites

30 Gesundheit includes v. 6a (watching the animal until the fourteenth) in this addition because of its formulation as direct address to Israel, its topical link to and qualification of the date in the base-text (taking the animal on the tenth), and its specific place within the layout of the addition (*Three Times a Year*, 46–55). It may be that a three-day delay affords the Israelites time to prepare the animal, removing its hair, feeding it extra, and the like, which adds a dimension of realism; note the motif at Exod 19:10–15; Josh 1:10–11.

31 Note also the assonance due to the shared noun-pattern: *pesah* – *petah*. For the aural correlation, see Gesundheit, *Three Times a Year*, 70 n. 58; on its point of emphasis, S. Chavel, *Oracular Law and Priestly Historiography in the Torah* (FAT II 71; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2014), 137.

32 That *h-p-z* connotes anxiety, see Deut 20:3; Ps 48:6; 116:11; F. Brown, S. R. Driver, and C. A. Briggs, *A Hebrew and English Lexicon of the Old Testament* (8th ed.; Oxford: Clarendon, 1907 [1975]), 342; E. Ben Yehuda, *A Complete Dictionary of Ancient and Modern Hebrew* (eds. H. Ben Yehuda, M. Z. Segal, and N. H. Tur-Sinai; 17 vols.; Tel Aviv: La'am Publishing House, 1948–1959), 3.1684–85 (Hebrew). Gesundheit notes the alliteration and how it serves characterization, but, focused on the immediate juxtaposition of the clauses within

should repeat this set of actions forever does not specify the reason, significance, category, or mood. Its denotation of the set solely as a neutral “procedure” (דבר) lacks any direct connotation of divine presence or potency and of the categories, requirements, and activities that typically attend it, like sacrality, purity, gift-giving, and blessing.³³ Taken as a whole, the remark seems to convey commemoration by reenactment, namely, recreating the event and reliving the moment (which subsequent editors and authors change or contradict).

At the same time that this set of additions draws clearer links to the narrative context, explaining the procedure as essential to the liberation of the Israelites from Egypt, it also creates an anomaly within the *Priestly History*. According to the narrative, Yahweh struck Egypt broadly multiple times, yet he never required a sign to identify the Israelites and spare them harm and he never provided them a means for repelling the strike. Why should he do so now in this attack? The author of the addition fails to attend to this discrepancy.³⁴

One cannot determine with justified confidence whether the author of the addition drew the extra details of the procedure from personal experience or from other parts of the *Priestly History*; so too, whether the linguistic links reflect prior lore or interpretive finesse. The exegetical logic and aesthetic arrangement demonstrated meticulously by Gesundheit,³⁵ together with the word-play, strongly encourage viewing the addition primarily as literarily generated. That literary, hermeneutic quality; the non-festive, non-potent character of the reenactment; and the imperfect continuity with the larger narrative – these together put the recovery of an original Pesah further out of reach and challenge the very notion of originality.³⁶

In fact, the disconnection of the *pesah* from categories of divine presence and potency in any given present that characterizes this literary stage seems to have troubled an ancient reader, who made yet another insertion into the text,

v. 11, he considers the present location to serve a different end, an ideologically driven obliteration of the protective valence of *p-s-h* and its replacement by anxious hurry; see *idem*, *Three Times a Year*, 72–73, and revisit n. 58 there.

33 For rules regulating proximity and approach to the deity, the *Priestly History* uses the terms חקה and תורה.

34 J. Stackert thinks the *Priestly History* has the Israelites living among the Egyptians (*A Prophet Like Moses: Prophecy, Law, and Israelite Religion* [Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014], 183–84), and that Israelites were affected as well as Egyptians and in this extreme attack in need of a sign (personal communication). But other segments of the *Priestly History* have the Israelites living all together in Goshen (Gen 46:31–47:6, 27).

35 See especially Gesundheit, *Three Times a Year*, 50–58.

36 The way that the lack of connections to the story exacerbates the obscurity of the base-text, together with the way the set of additions works to draw the procedure closer to the story, make it tempting to attribute all the elements that situate the base-text within the narrative – vv. 1, 3a, 28 – to the addition and to see the addition as composed on top of the base-text for the very purpose of incorporating the base-text and the addition as a single text into the narrative of the *Priestly History*. Compare n. 17 above.

what is now vv. 25–27a.³⁷ This insertion adds a new conclusion to Yahweh's instructions, in which he elaborates on the topic of future generations.

And you shall keep this procedure as a rule for you and your descendants in perpetuity.

And when you come to the land that Yahweh will give you as he said, you shall keep this service. And when your children say to you, "What is this service you are doing?" you shall reply, "It is a *pesah*-sacrifice for Yahweh, because he passed the homes of the Israelites in Egypt when he struck Egypt, and our homes he saved."

Yahweh repeats his requirement for annual reenactment (v. 24) but loads the repetition with highly charged terms. Correcting, as it were, the neutral expression "procedure" (דבר in v. 24), he now refers to "service" (עבדה in vv. 25, 26) and to the slaughter and use of the animal as a "(slaughter-)gift, sacrifice" (זבח in v. 27).³⁸ Yahweh also repeats and sharpens his earlier defining statement, "It is the *pesah* l-Yahweh" (פסח הוא ליהוה in v. 11bβ); heading it now by the categorical term "sacrifice" activates the third sense of the preposition *l*- and makes the statement one of purpose: "it is the *pesah*-sacrifice for Yahweh" (זבח פסח הוא ליהוה in v. 27).³⁹ The category of "sacrifice" indicates divine presence or attentiveness, while the father's explanation glorifies the deity and establishes a mood of thanks and joy. On a visit to a temple, a deity's earthly home, the counterpart to this exchange might be a hymn.⁴⁰ Namely, it is the author of this insertion who introduced the sacrificial categories, concepts, and meaning into this text about the *pesah* – or who assimilated the *pesah* in this text to the world of divine residence and sacrifice. In doing so, the author also shifted the perspective of those supposed to re-perform the *pesah* from reliving the moment to looking back upon it and appreciating its outcome.

So far, then, the various texts that make up the passage about the *pesah* configure two different forms of memory. One aims to relive the moment in all its tension before its resolution. The other reflects upon the moment retrospectively and it does so from the point of view of its happy conclusion.

37 Gesundheit treats this passage as part of the addition (*ibid.*, 58–66), but considers that it could have been added separately to highlight the educational aspect (*ibid.*, 64 n. 44). The suggestion here goes a bit beyond that view. On v. 27b (and v. 21) as an even later set of additions, see *ibid.*, 66–67.

38 Perhaps the shared noun-pattern played a role in considering the *pesah* a *zebah*. In terms of the different works that make up the Torah, the introduction in v. 25 is characteristic of the *Priestly History* (*ibid.*, 62 n. 40). At the same time, priestly terminology reserves עבדה for physical labor (J. Milgrom, *Studies in Levitical Terminology, I: The Encroacher and the Levite; the Term 'Aboda* [Berkeley: University of California Press, 1970], 60–68, 72–82) and employs the root ש-ר-ת for tending to the deity; the pairing and interchangeability of עבדה "service" and זבח "slaughter-)gift, sacrifice" are amply evident in all the other works present in the Torah.

39 See the various sacrifices and sacrificial elements – the wholly burnt animal (עלה); the aromatic gift (אשה + ריח ניחוח) – formulated this way, e.g., Exod 29:18, 25. That אשה means "(food-)gift," see J. Milgrom, *Leviticus 1–16* (AB 3; New York: Doubleday, 1991), 161–62.

40 E.g., Ps 105; 135; also Ps 78.

Seen within the *Priestly History*, the addition of vv. 25–27a, which labels the *pesah* a sacrifice, facilitated the reanimation of several of the obscure *pesah* instructions in prior stages of the text with new significance (vv. 5, 8, 10). The audience that reads on in the *Priestly History* will encounter the world of Yahweh's tabernacle (esp. Exod 29; Lev 1–9) and hear distinct echoes of the *pesah* instructions. The criterion of wholeness is a hallmark of sacrificial animals.⁴¹ The age of one year features in high-profile wholly-burnt offerings, like the twice-daily (Exod 29:38–42) and the tabernacle-inaugural (Num 7:10–88), but also recurs in all the major classes (see Lev 23:18–20; Num 6:12, 13–15). The kind and sex – male lambs – correspond to the wholly-burnt offering.⁴² Both eating the *pesah* with flatbread (מצות) and making sure nothing remains by morning characterize the thanksgiving variety of the wellbeing offering (Lev 7:12–13, 15; 22:29–30), but also the inaugural offerings shared by the tabernacle-priests, Aaron and his sons (Exod 29:31–33; Lev 8:22 + 31). More abstractly, Yahweh's methods for sanctifying the priests and inaugurating the tabernacle – blood-dabbing, blood-tossing, a prohibition on leaving a circumscribed space, and eradicating all food-remains by morning (Exod 29:34; Lev 8:24, 32–35) – invite one to correlate the *pesah* and reconsider its significance in their light.

If the authors of the base-text and the first set of additions knew of a *pesah* sacrifice, they left its connection to their texts implicit and left it to their readers to draw the links and to bridge the gap hermeneutically or otherwise. The third stage, the insertion at Exod 12:25–27a, asserts an identity between the procedure detailed for the *pesah* in Egypt (vv. 22–23) and its annual repetition ever after (v. 25 “*this service*”), but the change to categorical terminology generates the implication that after that one time in Egypt the *pesah* would change and become a sacrifice.⁴³ In having generated this implication, the author of the insertion mounted an argument at once phenomenological and historical. And yet, the motive remains opaque. Possibly, the author recast the *pesah* in sacrificial terms to reflect his own practice of it. Equally possible, though, he derived the notion from the narrative of the *Priestly History*, as follows: If Yahweh had the plan to have a tabernacle made for him (Exod 19:1–2a; 24:16–18a; 25–31; 34:29–35; 35–40), to have sacrifice play an essential role in it (Lev 1–16), and to demand that all animals allowed for consumption be brought to the tabernacle as sacrifice (Lev 17),⁴⁴ then surely in Egypt when he said to repeat the *pesah* annually (Exod 12:24) he meant as a sacrifice (vv. 25–27a).⁴⁵

41 See Milgrom, *Leviticus 1–16*, 147.

42 Before Haran and Wellhausen (above, n. 8), this series of correlations led A. Knobel to draw the sophisticated if problematic conclusion that the author constructed the *pesah* in Egypt as a pre-tabernacle version of the wholly-burnt offering (*Die Bücher Exodus und Leviticus* [KEHAT; Leipzig: Hirzel, 1857], 92–93).

43 Compare Gesundheit, *Three Times a Year*, 82–83.

44 Other than a few animals available for hunting (Lev 17:13; compare 11:1–43).

45 Between this point and Exod 19:1 the little material that belongs to the *Priestly History* does not indicate or suggest that Yahweh developed a new plan at a point in between. For the texts that belong to the *Priestly History* and analysis of its narrative, see J.S. Baden, *The*

As for the *Priestly History*, neither at this point (Exod 12) nor further on when Yahweh gives his instructions for the tabernacle, the Israelites build it, and it is inaugurated (Exod 25–31; 34:29–40:38; Lev 1–Num 8) does the narrative prescribe the realignment of the *pesah* and delineate its reconfiguration. It leaves open whether the *pesah* will continue as a domestic affair or move to the tabernacle; which of the classes of sacrifice it will fall into and how that classification will affect the details of its performance; and whether the significance of the blood will change or even shift to the meat. All these matters are left gapped and ambiguous; the text gives crossed signals. Any assimilation to the sacrificial system occurs at one remove, through interpretation by the audience, ancient no less than modern. Indeed, one cannot assume the system, categories, and configurations of the *Priestly History* – a highly-wrought ideological story from Iron II set in Israel-Judea’s foundational past centuries before – to have been in practice in a way that any of its earliest audience would know firsthand as real practice. Any such systematizing could very well have taken place at the literary level, and arguably might have to be approached as having done so until justified evidence can indicate otherwise.

Importantly, the text at Exod 12 contains another set of additions, at vv. 12–20, in which Yahweh gives the *pesah* a new dimension, a leaven-free week of flatbread. In Gesundheit’s analysis, different aspects of the text work together to *replace* the single-evening *pesah* with a seven-day festival of leaven-free homes and flatbread.⁴⁶ Commemoration will entail neither recreating and reliving the circumstances, nor offering a gift from the vantage point of the happy conclusion, but an alternate medium altogether, a non-meat, grain-based food in an environment free of leaven, the mood around which is festive but the significance of which is left unsaid.⁴⁷

Composition of the Pentateuch: Renewing the Documentary Hypothesis (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2012), 169–213; *idem*, “The Original Place of the Priestly Manna Story in Exodus 16,” *ZAW* 122 (2010): 491–504; B. J. Schwartz, “The Priestly Account of the Theophany and Lawgiving at Sinai,” in *Texts, Temples, and Traditions: A Tribute to Menahem Haran* (eds. M. V. Fox et al.; Winona Lake, Ind.: Eisenbrauns, 1996), 103–34.

- 46 Gesundheit identifies vv. 12–17 as an insertion with a threefold aim: to redefine the *pesah* as a one-time procedure for the unique conditions in Egypt when Yahweh attacked Egypt, to deny the continued observance of any kind of *pesah* at all, and to replace it completely by a week free of leaven and leavened foods; moreover, it was written as a revised version of vv. 22–27a, replacing its attack against all Egyptians by an attack against the firstborns (*ibid.*, 67–84). Another insertion, vv. 18–20, aimed to establish the calendrical rubric left ambiguous in the previous one (*ibid.*, 84–89). A subsequent editor resuscitated vv. 22–27a by framing it with vv. 21, 27b and reinserting it as Moses’s speech (*ibid.*, 66–67).
- 47 Similarly, at Exod 13:1–16, a commemorative set of practices around firstborn sons and animals was interpolated by a revised version of the same text now about a leaven-free week of flatbread; see the discussion of Gesundheit, *Three Times a Year*, 167–222. So, too, Deut 16:1–8: unleavened bread has been inserted into a text originally about a sacrificial *pesah*, and as in Exod 12, that original text in Deut 16, formulated only to demand the *pesah* be done at Yahweh’s one chosen site, revealed nothing about where it used to be done or how; see *ibid.*, 96–149 (contra Levinson, *Deuteronomy*, 53–97). On the calendar in Exod 23 and a

This addition too stands at some odds with the *Priestly History*.⁴⁸ In other moments of instruction, Yahweh stipulates the leaven-free week of flatbread that begins on the fifteenth of the month, but he also insists upon the *pesah*, and he insists upon it as a distinct event that occurs on a separate day, the fourteenth (Lev 23:4–8; Num 28:16–25). Similarly, after the Israelites cross the Jordan river into Canaan, the narrator describes them as having performed the *pesah* on the fourteenth and begun eating flatbread on the following day, the fifteenth (Josh 5:10–11).

Exodus 12:43–50

The narrative moment in which Yahweh first laid out the *pesah* naturally recommends itself as the site to debate the *pesah* through supplementation and revision. It also lends itself to the expectation that all such debate-through-intervention will occur in it, one move after the other. However, another passage added elsewhere in the *Priestly History* expresses something of the ideas, mood, and outlook specifically of the first set of additions to the base-text, and develops them apart from sacrifice and without mentioning a week of flatbread.

At a vague point further on in the story, after the Israelites have left Egypt, Yahweh gives Moses and Aaron another set of instructions, “the *pesah* rule,” at Exod 12:43–50. Like the remarks about future re-performance, at v. 24 and vv. 25–27a, this set of instructions looks forward to life in the land, in particular when Israelites will have foreigners and resident aliens, slaves and hired hands, an economy and busy households. The author considers how the compound notion of “(physical) house and (social) household” (בית) that was delineated for Israel’s specific conditions in Egypt, at vv. 3b–5, 7, 9–10, 22b, should be adapted for Canaan.⁴⁹ First, the author has Yahweh establish that non-Israelite males in an Israelite household – or heads of their own households – cannot replace the Israelite neighbors in Egypt for the purposes of ensuring the complete consumption of the meat; they must undergo a form of affiliation through circumcision (vv. 43–45, 48). Second, the author draws several performative inferences regarding the house. He combines the warning against leaving the house (v. 22b) with the subordinate remark that the Israelites will be eating the meat inside their homes (v. 7b) and the requirement to burn any leftover meat by morning (v. 10), and has Yahweh prohibit anyone from allowing any of the meat to leave the house (v. 46aβ). The subordinate clause indicating that the roasted meat should include the head, the legs and the insides, namely, the entire animal (v. 9b), he seems to have taken

revised version of it in Exod 34, which do not connect the flatbread festival with the *pesah*, see Gesundheit, *Three Times a Year*, 12–43.

48 *Ibid.*, 82.

49 Contrast *ibid.*, 83 n. 90, where Gesundheit seems to understand “the house” here as a reference to the temple.

quite literally to indicate that its bones must be kept whole (v. 46b).⁵⁰ This set of instructions carefully delimits the notions of house and household and keeps house and household secure during the *pesah* observance. Significantly, it does not invoke the category of sacrifice, the implications of divine attentiveness, or the mood of joy and thanksgiving. It assumes and reinforces the anxiety of protection. That the author held this view of the *pesah* helps explain its location in the *Priestly History*, right after the narrator emphasizes the special quality of “this night” as one of divine protection (vv. 40–42). So does its focus on the status of non-Israelites, which follows up the detail stated by the narrator that non-Israelites joined the exodus from Egypt (v. 37).

The “*pesah* rule” bears the classic signs of an insertion. It comes at a discontinuous point in the narrative – the narrator seems to interrupt his own telling midstream – and a resumptive repetition frames it (vv. 40–42 // v. 51). But it does not refer to the festival that should begin with the *pesah* or immediately afterwards, the flatbread that characterizes it, or the work prohibition that marks its beginning and end. This silence could indicate that the “*pesah* rule” predates the addition of the flatbread festival at vv. 12–20 – or it could tacitly signal complete rejection of its argument. Actually, the “*pesah* rule” does not use the sacrificial terminology of the addition at vv. 25–27 either; it has a domestic setting for the re-performance; it aligns most closely with the first set of additions, which had linked the *pesah* to the priestly narrative, added concretizing details about the procedure, and established its mood as anxiety; and topically it seems to pick up where the concluding remark about future performance, at v. 24, had left off – filling in the details of re-performance. The presence of two separate passages in the *Priestly History* that develop a non-sacrificial set of ideas about the *pesah* – one inserted piecemeal into an earlier core at the relevant point in the narrative and another inserted at a subsequent point as a complete unit – shows the ideas to be neither aboriginal nor idiosyncratic, but a development of the narrative of the *Priestly History* that responds to it as an expressive work and a locus of identity.

Numbers 9:1–14

Whereas the domestic conception and configuration of the “*pesah* rule” inserted at Exod 12:43–50 follows up Yahweh’s remark about future reenactment at v. 24, yet another episode seen by modern scholars as an insertion into the *Priestly History* aligns with the sacrificial thrust of the conclusion added at vv. 25–27a – an episode about making up a missed *pesah*, at Num 9:1–14. Like

50 In the oldest manuscripts of the Greek Bible (4th–5th cents. C.E.), this instruction also occurs in the rules for the Egyptian *pesah*, in the middle of Exod 12:10 (A. E. Brooke and N. McLean, *The Old Testament in Greek* [4 vols., Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009], 1.190–91 [orig. pub. 1906–1940]); see further below, n. 59. The instruction also appears in Num 9:12 and an argument can be made that in fact the author of “the *pesah* rule” has adapted it from there; see below, n. 57.

the author of the conclusion at Exod 12:25–27a, the author of the episode at Num 9:1–14 considers the *pesah* in relation to the tabernacle and its rules, categories, and concepts. The conclusion added at Exod 12:25–27a to recast the *pesah* in sacrificial terms implies a phenomenological and historical change in the character of the *pesah*; the story about the make-up *pesah* features that change. The narrative does not present the situation in which the Israelites learned or inferred precisely how to adapt the *pesah*. Everything about the narrative takes for granted that the next *pesah* – one year after the exodus and just two weeks after the tabernacle's construction – will differ from the original and what some of its distinguishing aspects are.

Like the text about the *pesah* in Egypt at Exod 12:1–28, the text about the *pesah* in the wilderness at Num 9:1–14 attracted further intervention. In this case, two separate sets of insertions responded to the tacit nature of the narrative by adding details about the shift from the Egyptian *pesah* to the tabernacle one. As in the case of Exod 12:1–28, the insertions pull the narrative in different directions.⁵¹

According to the storyline of the *Priestly History*, about two months after the original *pesah* and the liberation from Egypt Yahweh brought Israel to Mount Sinai, where over the course of another ten months he delineated and they built a palatial tent so he could live among them. Nearly one year to the day since the liberation, during the week-long inauguration of the tabernacle and its personnel, Yahweh told Moses the Israelites should “do (עשו) the *pesah*” on the fourteenth of the month “according to all its rules and all its regulations;” Moses told the Israelites and they did so (Num 9:1–5). The story continues by noting that in fact not everyone did; a group of people had approached Moses with the problem that they contracted corpse-impurity, which precludes their doing the *pesah* (vv. 6–8). How did they know that impurity rules out doing the *pesah*? Such a factor does not appear in the rules and regulations in Egypt.

The narrative does not present how the impure Israelites came to their knowledge. It presupposes that the people have learned well the rules given by Yahweh in the past two weeks about life around his tabernacle:⁵² they know that anyone who plans to eat meat must bring it to the tabernacle as a sacrifice (Lev 17:1–9) and be in a state of purity (7:19–21) and they correctly inferred that the *pesah* must assimilate to these categories and norms of divine presence.

51 For source-critical analysis of this text, see Chavel, *Oracular Law*, 93–147.

52 According to Exod 40, the tabernacle was set up on the first day of the first month of the second year and Yahweh entered it. According to Lev 1:1, Yahweh immediately began issuing Moses instructions. According to the narrative, this set of instructions includes all the laws through 24:9. An incident during that time led to additional legislation, in 24:10–23. According to Num 9:1, during this period Yahweh also instructed Moses to have the Israelites do the *pesah*. By implication, by the time the Israelites do the *pesah* on the fourteenth, Moses will have recently completed transmitting all the laws and the Israelites will have them fresh in their minds.

The logic also dictates that slaughter of the *pesah* must take place at the tabernacle where designated personnel can catch the blood to toss it over the altar (17:6), which, evidently, rules out swabbing the entrance of the family tent with the blood and eating at home throughout the night, but the narrative never indicates quite that much. In this light, the single-minded use of the catch-all verb “to do” (ע-ש-ה) throughout the episode (thirteen times, in Num 9:2–6, 10–14) may opaquely encompass the shift from the norms of Egypt to those of the tabernacle-camp.

As the narrative continues, Yahweh rules that Israelites prevented from doing the *pesah* on time may – or rather, must – do it exactly one month later (vv. 9–11a). He names two categories of prevention, the state of impurity raised by the petitioners, which disallows participation, and physical distance, which makes participation impossible practically (vv. 10, 13). Just as the category of impurity derives from the presence of the deity in the tabernacle – an essential principle of priestly historiography generally – so too the category of physical proximity. As the Israelites in the wilderness do not have foreseeable cause ever to be prohibitively far from the tabernacle, Yahweh must have life in Canaan in mind, when many Israelites will live too far to make the journey on time, at the end of the rainy season when roads could be washed out and the beginning of the harvest season when the anxious farmer will want to stay close to home.⁵³ Namely, Yahweh’s two categories of prevention, too, reflect the transposition of the *pesah* to the concept, configuration, and circumstances of the tabernacle.

Repeatedly the narrative highlights the matter of the date, among other things by pairing it with the general term “doing” used for all other aspects of the *pesah*.⁵⁴ Offsetting the date of the *pesah* this way serves the very heart of the narrative, which advances the unusual innovation of a make-up date for a calendar-defined observance and anchors it in the artificial, calendrical terms of a month.⁵⁵

Notably, the narrative presents the *pesah* as subordinate to the rules and regulations connected with Yahweh’s tabernacle, which when they are given define the category of sacrifice. At the same time, the narrative neither considers the consequences to the specific details of the *pesah* as outlined in Egypt nor employs the terminology that would mark the *pesah* categorically as a sacrifice. This narrow focus and reticence raises the question about the degree of assimilation and transformation of the *pesah*. Each of two sets of insertions

53 Ibn Ezra noted that Yahweh’s irregular qualifying clause “regarding you or regarding your posterity” (לכם או לדורותיכם) in v. 10 acknowledges the inapplicability of the statement as a whole to the present Israelites; see further Chavel, *Oracular Law*, 103–04. That it refers to the situation of Israelians and Judeans who live far from the one legitimated site (and are not away on a trip), see *ibid.*, 153–61.

54 For the manifold points of emphasis, see Chavel, *Oracular Law*, 124–25, 133–34.

55 On the unusual nature of a make-up date for a calendrically-defined observance, see *ibid.*, 96.

into the narrative works to fill one of these two major gaps. The results pull the concept of the *pesah* in different directions.

One of the insertions into the narrative (at Num 9:11b–12a) – identifiable by the anomalous specification of three random details of the *pesah*, Yahweh's reference to Israel in plural rather than singular, and a sandwiching repetition – adds a series of direct references to the specifics of the Egyptian *pesah* detailed by Yahweh.⁵⁶ Between the initial part of Yahweh's reply, that impure and distant Israelites shall perform the *pesah* exactly one month after its primary date (vv. 10–11a), and its counterpart, that one who fails to perform the *pesah* for unrecognized reasons will suffer eradication (v. 13), Yahweh lists three details of that performance: that the *pesah* shall be eaten with flatbread and bitter herbs, that none of it shall last until morning, and that its bones shall not be broken (vv. 11b–12a). Then he states in the general terms typical of the narrative that it shall be performed according to all its rules, literally, “according to the entire *pesah* rule” (v. 12b). The first two regulations repeat elements of the *pesah* in Egypt (Exod 12:8, 10) and the third seems to correlate thematically, but in the immediate context they appear totally random.⁵⁷ Evidently, the motive was to clarify the practical implications of holding the *pesah* one month after its primary date (Num 9:11a), when measured against the Egyptian *pesah* in its fully edited version, namely, with the leaven-free week of flatbread (Exod 12:1–28):

Question 1: Given that the impure Israelite defers only the *pesah* but continues to observe the week of flatbread with all Israel in the first month, should the impure continue to eat the *pesah* with flatbread (so Exod 12:8)? Does the flatbread serve as segue between the *pesah* and the week of flatbread that begins immediately afterwards, or does it have its own character? Answers the interpolator: the deferred *pesah* must still be eaten with flatbread (Num

56 Verses 11a and 12b may be a resumptive repetition, in which case v. 12b would be the added element. But the correspondence of vv. 11a and 12b together to v. 3 might indicate that the interpolator exploited an existing repetition judiciously. Both clauses are formulated in the plural, but it stands to reason that they have been revised from the singular to transition from the singular to the plural and back again. See Chavel, *Oracular Law*, 123–27.

57 The prohibition on quartering the animal (v. 12a), the general remark about carrying out all the *pesah* regulations (v. 12b), and the conclusion regarding the applicability of all the *pesah* rules (lit. “the entire *pesah* rule”) to native and resident alien alike (v. 14) all appear in Exod 12:43–50. Evidently, the author of Exod 12:43–50 adapted the text of *pesah* deferral: (a) in Num 9:1–14 the three elements were inserted into the text, whereas in Exod 12:43–50 they belong to the base-text; (b) in Num 9:1–14 the conclusion at v. 14 stands as an isolated remark typical of the *Priestly History*, whereas in Exod 12:49 it contradicts the thrust of the rules; (c) in Num 9:1–14 the phrase “the entire *pesah* rule” functions (twice) as a general reference to all the regulations alongside the matter of the date, be they what they are, whereas in Exod 12:43–50 it functions as a title for the specific set of regulations to follow and their shared thrust (compare Chavel, *Oracular Law*, 127–30). If so, “the *pesah* rule” of Exod 12:43–50 may have been composed to undercut the tabernacle-orientation of Num 9:1–14 and preemptively restrict it to the wilderness period.

9:11b).⁵⁸ Question 2: Given that only the impure and the immediate family will perform the deferred *pesah* together, not the preset number of families that guarantees its complete consumption, must the *pesah* still be completely consumed and obliterated (so Exod 12:10), or can some be left till morning and beyond? Relatedly, question 3: must the entire animal be roasted whole to guarantee none is lost track of and left over (so v. 9b), or can one now quarter it? Answers the interpolator: It must still be consumed and obliterated by morning and roasted whole (Num 9:12a).⁵⁹

Measuring the effect of a deferred *pesah* on the rules enjoined in Egypt, formulating definitive views, and inserting them into the text as Yahweh's rules have a compound effect. First of all, having Yahweh specify certain rules that *pesah* deferral does not nullify establishes those rules as operative for the *pesah* on its primary date. If the main narrative spoke in very general terms about "doing" the *pesah* in order to offset and highlight the date (e.g. vv. 3b, 5b), the inserted set of rules effectively delimits those general terms with some concrete examples. Secondly, the insertion has Yahweh's full reply explicitly amalgamating the two very distinct configurations of the *pesah*, the domestic protective measure and the tabernacle slaughter-gift, rather than shifting from one to the other, as Exod 12:25–27a and the main narrative of Num 9:1–14 could be taken to imply. Thirdly, when seen as a group, the specific rules treated and inserted may intimate a categorical distinction between various aspects of the Egyptian *pesah*: the eating-site and blood-manipulation obviated by the assimilation of the *pesah* to the rules and categories of tabernacle sacrifice, on the one hand, and the other aspects of preparing and eating the meat, which remain in force as distinctive of the *pesah*, on the other.

In addition to these effects, the ruling that one who defers the *pesah* must still eat it with flatbread raises an ambiguity regarding the significance. The interpolator could have felt that the sacrificial character of the *pesah* does not preclude eating it with flatbread and therefore the deferred *pesah* should continue to feature it, with no categorical or phenomenological significance beyond the theological impulse that a divine instruction should persist until explicitly or logically abrogated. However, if the interpolator had the leaven-free week of flatbread in mind (Exod 12:14–20) and understood that Yahweh's statement about the day of the *pesah* being celebrated as an annual festival

58 Note the syntactically improved formulation, from Exod 12:8 *על־מררים יאכלו* to Num 9:11b *על־מצות ומררים יאכלו* (Gesundheit, *Three Times a Year*, 80 n. 83).

59 Note the cluster of three forms of adaptation: the replacement of the technical term *תותירו* by the generic one *ישאירו* (Exod 12:10 *עַד־בֶּקֶר מִמֶּנּוּ תֹתִירוּ*; Num 9:12 *לֹא יִשְׁאִירוּ מִמֶּנּוּ*); the interpretive inference that roasting "the head together with the thighs" (Exod 12:9) means no quartering (Num 9:12); and the well-known inversion of sequence (of Exod 12:9–10 in Num 9:12a). The presence of the prohibition on quartering at Exod 12:10 in the Greek Bible (noted above, n. 50) likely represents a boomerang effect of Num 9:11–12; note how in Exod 12:10 it interrupts the topical flow between the clauses around it and the text there lacks perceptible triggers for its omission (see further Chavel, *Oracular Law*, 125 n. 114).

forever after served to define the character of that week (v. 14), then the decision to insist upon the flatbread may mean to evoke the festival and signal a festive mood, even though the isolated family does not perform the *pesah* with the nation as a whole. In any case, the separation between the deferred *pesah* and the leaven-free festival leans away from the thrust of the passage at Exod 12:12–20 to bring them together as a single rubric, and towards Yahweh's calendrical instructions at Lev 23, which merely juxtapose the two but do not signal any substantive connection between them (vv. 5–8).⁶⁰

Whereas the insertion at Num 9:11b–12a limits the complete assimilation and transformation of the *pesah* by preserving elements of the protective *pesah* as commemorative or as divine command, a separate set of insertions makes an explicit categorical claim for the *pesah* as the sacrifice *par excellence*. Twice, characters in the story refer to the *pesah* as “the offering of Yahweh” קרבן יהוה (in construct, without the preposition *l-*) and in both instances they double-down, so to speak, by employing as well the cognate verb “to offer” (*q-r-b* in the H stem): the impure petitioners coin the expression (v. 7) and Yahweh adopts it (v. 13).⁶¹

How does the presence of the clause affect the narrative? Without the clause, the narrative indicates a strong conception about the singular value of the *pesah*, but it does so implicitly and in negative terms. Yahweh concludes his instructions about missing the *pesah* on a threatening note: anyone who is not impure and does not live a journey away yet omits the *pesah* will suffer eradication from the people (v. 13). The definitive value of the *pesah* signaled by this threat undergirds the irregular norm advanced by the narrative, that a person must make up a missed *pesah*.⁶² But neither Yahweh nor the narrator provides a rationale, and any attempt to trace a logical arc of conceptual and practical derivation from elements in Yahweh's rules about sacrifice elsewhere in the *Priestly History* faces significant gaps.

In this elliptical context, the pair of insertions provide categorical specificity. They denote the *pesah* technically as “an offering” (קרבת), denote the activity related to it by the technical term “offer” (H *q-r-b*), and express its

60 Chavel, *Oracular Law*, 131–36. In contrast to all the other entries in Yahweh's list, the one for the *pesah* (v. 5) leaves out all distinguishing elements, and its formulation is as ambiguous grammatically as it is opaque in substance; one does not know whether the omission means to presume and embrace any of the possible readings of Exod 12, tacitly to reject them, or to prescind from entering the debate.

61 On this set of insertions, see *ibid.*, 143–46.

62 Without the clause in Num 9:7, the petitioners would have asked, “Why should we be cut off (נגרע) from the midst of the Israelites (למ[תוך בני ישראל])?” See the willful reading of *Sifre Zuta* at 9:7 “‘Why should we be cut off (נגרע) (למה נגרע)’ – Why should we be cut off from Israel? (למה אנו נגרעין מִיִּשְׂרָאֵל).” Compare Yahweh's reply at v. 13: “Anyone who is pure and was not on a (distant) road and omitted doing the *pesah*, that person (fem. נפש) will be cut off (ונכרתה) from her people (מעמיה),” and the parallel petition at 27:4: “Why should our father's name be cut off (יגרע) from the midst of his family (מתוך משפחתו)?” See further Chavel, *Oracular Law*, 146 n. 170.

relationship to Yahweh as one of immediate and total possession (the bound phrase קרבן יהוה). This definition fully assimilates the *pesah* to the conceptual world of gifts for Yahweh, of sacrifices offered at his tabernacle. Indeed, the construct formulation casts the *pesah* as Yahweh's most beloved and wholeheartedly received gift.

Together, the idea (inserted into the narrative) that the *pesah* is the definitive, quintessential offering and the idea (present already in the main narrative) that omission of the *pesah* leads to one's eradication correlate suggestively with the pledged thanksgiving offering and the failure to fulfill it – a complex motif expressed in varied literature throughout the Hebrew Bible, which shows it to have had live purchase among Israelian and Judean authors. In its fullest build, the notion has the individual anxiously pledging in crisis (see Jon 2:10), thankfully fulfilling afterwards, joyously singing to Yahweh, and perpetuating the deserved fame of his power and devotion (as in Ps 22; 26; 27; 42–43; 50; 54; 56; 61; 65; 66; 76; 116; also 96; 107:19–22; 118). Among texts of instructional voice, some warn about the cynical use of pledge-fulfillment to divert attention from misdeeds (Prov 7:14), others about the trouble that follows upon failure to fulfill (Deut 23:22–24; Qoh 5:1–4). In the *Priestly History*, Yahweh says that one who pledges and forgets or uses something of Yahweh's requires purification and forgiveness (Lev 5:4–10, 14–16); moreover, when specific objects are pledged, they cannot be replaced (27:9–10, 28). Possibly, the author of the insertion who labeled the *pesah* an out-and-out offering understood the enigmatic rule of the Egyptian *pesah* about designating the animal on the tenth and keeping it safe until the fourteenth (Exod 12:3 + 6) along the lines of a pledged object.⁶³ In any case, the insertion expands individual pilgrimage and thanksgiving to the level of the nation as a whole, as a household of national scope. Though significantly under-indicated in the text of Num 9:1–14, the notion corresponds to “the *pesah* rule” (Exod 12:43–50) in considering the *pesah* a definitive practice of national significance, but differs from it in implying pilgrimage and thanksgiving rather than commemorative reenactment of anxiety and protection at home.⁶⁴

In sum, the *Priestly History* manifests the fundamental problem of attempting to recover an original practice like the *pesah*, its contours and its meaning, from an ancient literary work, but also of isolating an original or enduring literary tradition about it. As a whole, the ancient work lacks attribution, dating, historical and social provenance, and cultural context. As a history, it cloaks its normative commitments allegorically in the terms of the deep foundational past, in a way that demands of its audience hermeneutical or other forms of bridging. In their specifics, the passages that treat the *pesah* do not cohere with each other, nor does any one of them present a complete and completely

63 Thanks to Liane Marquis for this suggestion.

64 As argued above, n. 57, it appears that the author of Exod 12:43–50 worked after that of Num 9:1–14, adapted from that text, and intended to restrict its temple-orientation to the wilderness period.

comprehensible portrayal. From arguably the earliest passage about the *pesaḥ* through the series of insertions, a solid core cannot be identified, and as subsequent materials take the stage they take alternate, ever-shifting directions. The *Priestly History* contains within itself a history of hermeneutical engagements, adaptations, and re-adaptations of the *pesaḥ* as widely disparate as precise reenactment and total replacement, some facilitated by the history itself and its inconsistencies, others by opaque factors and forces outside it.

Part II: Chronicles

2 Chronicles 30; 35

The “*pesaḥ* rule” at Exod 12:43–50 presents the *pesaḥ* as a national event in that all Israelites perform it at home at the same time to relive the expectant anxiety around Yahweh’s salvation. The novella of the deferred *pesaḥ* at Num 9:1–14 presents the *pesaḥ* as a national gift in that all Israelites converge on the deity’s home and do him homage in joyous thanks. Both determine the *pesaḥ* by orienting it towards the past. The biblical book *Chronicles* presents the *pesaḥ* as a national event *per se*, as a vehicle for national cohesion in the here and now.

Chronicles is a history parallel in scope, outline, and contents to that spanning *Genesis–Kings*, a “revised second edition” prepared in the late Persian or early Hellenistic period (i.e. 4th cent. B.C.E.).⁶⁵ It comprises three elements: large-scale excerpts from *Genesis–Kings*, whether precise, revised, or adapted; excerpts and lore from sources unreferenced and unknown; and material entirely innovated by the author, namely, generated through historical inference, literary hermeneutics, and ideology. Ideologically, it works to combine and integrate the divine program of ordered space in the Torah of Moses and the divine program of royally ordered society under David and his line in *Judges–Kings*. Accordingly, if *Genesis–Kings* and the embedded sources represent the composite work of varied authors presenting their own concepts, circumstances, and struggles in the guise of the foundational past, *Chronicles* compounds the method and complicates its effect by employing *Genesis–Kings* as its base-text while reading it against itself.

One very brief, subordinate episode about the *pesaḥ* in *Kings* (2 Kgs 23:21–23) generated two long, full-fledged ones in *Chronicles* (2 Chr 30:1–27; 35:1–19). In the *Kings* episode, an ancient text of divine instruction discovered by temple administrators rouses the king Josiah (late seventh cent. B.C.E.) to purge Judea thoroughly of mis-worship and to rededicate Judeans to Yahweh, in a sweeping program crowned by a national *pesaḥ* at the temple in Jerusalem (2

65 For critical overview, see S. Japhet, *I & II Chronicles* (Old Testament Library; Louisville, Ky.: Westminster John Knox Press, 1993), 3–28, 43–49; G. N. Knoppers, *I Chronicles 1–9* (The Anchor Bible; New York: Doubleday, 2004), 66–128.

Kgs 22:1–23:25). The narrator offers two points of historical perspective, one, that such a collective *pesah* at the temple had never before been held and, two, that Josiah was singular, no king prior or since having devoted himself so scrupulously and comprehensively to Yahweh (23:22, 25). Reinforcing these two points of emphasis, the brief narrative gives no attention to the specifics of the *pesah*, for instance, regarding blood or flatbread, the duration, the mood, the memory, or the potency. Modern scholars consider the author of the episode to have modeled the character of Josiah's *pesah* celebration, particularly its collective performance at the temple, on that at Deut 16:1–8 (or a prior version of it), and in telling of a text of divine instruction – to have had in mind another of the works that make up the Torah, a source in the Deuteronomic corpus, which retools law, religion, and society for a single sacred space.⁶⁶

Chronicles retells the story of Josiah (2 Chr 34–35). It presents the collective *pesah* celebration as a matter of its own standing quantitatively and qualitatively,⁶⁷ giving due attention to the categorical implications of a *pesah* as a temple sacrifice, according to a complete, composite Torah. Not just sheep but cattle also serve (vv. 7, 9; see Deut 16:2);⁶⁸ they are skinned, their blood is tossed rather than smeared, and they complement or are complemented by wholly-burnt offerings (2 Chr 35:11, 12, 14, 16) – like wellbeing offerings (Lev 1; 3).⁶⁹ The narrator also states (2 Chr 35:13), “they cooked the *pesah* by fire as mandated (בשׁל בִּי + אֵשׁ),” in contrast to the other offerings, which were “cooked in pots,” namely, in water (בשׁל בִּי + סִירֹת, דֹּדִים, צִלְחוֹת), which aligns the *pesah* procedure with the roasting demanded by Yahweh at Exod 12:8–9. Notably, towards the end of the episode the author throws in an ambiguous remark affirming the people observed the seven-day festival of flatbread at that time too (2 Chr 35:17), but fails to signal whether it began on the day of the *pesah* (Exod 12:14–17; Deut 16:2–4, 7–8; Ezek 45:21), the evening of the *pesah* (Exod 12:18–20), or the morning afterwards (Lev 23:5–6; Num 28:16–17),

66 On the relationship between 2 Kgs 22–23 and the Deuteronomic corpus, see M. Haran, *The Biblical Collection* (4 vols.; Jerusalem: Bialik and Magnes, 1996–2014), 2.32–40 (Hebrew); on the centralizing thrust running through the Deuteronomic corpus, S. Chavel, “Biblical Law,” in *The Literature of the Hebrew Bible: Introductions and Studies* (ed. Z. Talshir; 2 vols.; Jerusalem: Yad Ben-Zvi, 2011), 1.256–65 (Hebrew); on Deut 16:1–8 in particular, again, Gesundheit is masterful: *Three Times a Year*, 96–149.

67 The narrative gives it nineteen verses as opposed to three and locates it a decade after the religious purification of the land, as the conclusion to a general sprucing up of the temple (Japhet, *I & II Chronicles*, 1040–41 and 1019–20, respectively). By all indications, an entire Torah is discovered, not just a Deuteronomic work (Haran, *The Biblical Collection*, 2.38–39; Japhet, *I & II Chronicles*, 1030).

68 Scholars have found the text ambiguous as to whether the cattle count as *pesahim* or complement them, e. g., Japhet, *I & II Chronicles*, 1050, but both possibilities amount to a bona fide interpretation of Deut 16:2 by the author.

69 Scholars have found it ambiguous as to whether the term “wholly-burnt” refers to additional offerings or those parts of the *pesahim* burned upon the altar as in other sacrifice, e. g., Japhet, *I & II Chronicles*, 1052.

and whether their association had any significance beyond calendrical coincidence.⁷⁰

In retelling the story of Josiah's *pesah* celebration, the author of 2 Chr 35:1–19 has composed a new version 2 Kgs 23:21–23, one that is mindful of the Torah and other interests. If the narrative at 2 Kgs 23:21–23 throws the idea of gathering at the temple for Yahweh-worship into sharp relief through a *pesah* that caps a royally sponsored religious purge, the author of 2 Chr 35 presented the event as having its own integrity and took pains to portray its mechanics as a proper sacrifice. Yet this author too did not signal its mood, memory, or potency, but rather developed the narrative at 2 Kgs 23 to depict the *pesah* as the sacrifice of nationhood and as one performed by Josiah punctiliously.

Chronicles contains an additional episode inspired by Josiah's *pesah* at 2 Kgs 23:21–23, a national *pesah* sponsored by Hezekiah long before Josiah's, and it highlights how the *pesah* constitutes nationhood even *at the expense* of proper performance (2 Chr 30). Although historically and conceptually, in the planning of the narrative of *Chronicles*, the retelling of Josiah's *pesah* at 2 Chr 35:1–19 has priority over the innovated episode about Hezekiah at 2 Chr 30 and conditions it – nevertheless, historiographically, in terms of narrative sequence, Josiah's *pesah* is presented with Hezekiah's as its backdrop.

As told at 2 Chr 30, the king Hezekiah (late eighth cent. B.C.E.), aiming to reforge an Israelite people no longer divided as two kingdoms, announces a nation-wide celebration of the *pesah* (“I-Yahweh God of Israel”) at the temple he has just overhauled (in 2 Chr 29). Apathy by Israelites north and south, including the priests in Jerusalem, leads Hezekiah to cancel the *pesah*; in a move popular in the Greek world, he adjusts the calendar by intercalating a month, declaring the present month (the first of the year) to be and to have been the previous month again (the twelfth of the previous year), so the *pesah* come round again in a few weeks' time (30:2–4).⁷¹ Hezekiah launches a full-scale

70 The formulation of the contrast between cooking the *pesah* by fire and cooking the other sacrifices in pots (2 Chr 35:13) shows just how hermeneutical the narrative is. Yahweh's instructions about preparing the *pesah* at Exod 12:8–9 prohibit “boiling in water” (בשׁל במים) and require “flame-broiled” (צלי אש); both phrases join a medium-specific cooking term, בשׁל and צלי, with the term for the specific medium, מים and אש respectively, which reinforces the semantic and applied opposition between them. By contrast, according to Moses' speech at Deut 16:1–8, Yahweh mentioned boiling (בשׁל) as the method of food-preparation (v. 7). The author of 2 Chr 35 resolved the contradiction by the far-reaching inference that the verb לשׁל does not refer to the medium-specific “boiling,” but serves as a general term for heated food-preparation, “cooking.” Accordingly, he adapted the phrase בשׁל במים of Exod 12:8 as if it meant “cooked with water” and created the otherwise anomalous counterpart בשׁל באשׁ “cooked by fire” (2 Chr 35:13). See I. L. Seeligmann, *Studies in Biblical Literature* (eds. A. Hurvitz et al. Jerusalem: Magnes, 1996), 473–74 (Hebrew); Y. Zakovitch, *An Introduction to Inner-Biblical Interpretation* (Even-Yehuda: Reches, 1992), 124 (Hebrew); Japhet, *I & II Chronicles*, 1052–53. Contrast M. Fishbane, *Biblical Interpretation in Ancient Israel* (rev. ed.; Clarendon: Oxford, 1986 [1989]), 135–36; followed by Levinson, *Deuteronomy*, 155.

71 So *m. Pesah.* 4:9; *b. Pesah.* 56a; discussion and examples in Chavel, *Oracular Law*, 151–53. Accordingly, when the narrator uses the expression “month” + ordinal “two” – the people

campaign (vv. 5–10) that draws a massive turn-out (vv. 11–13), but the masses come in all their impurity (vv. 17–18a).⁷² Hezekiah prays to Yahweh to forgive the flaws that mar the event (vv. 18b–20) otherwise marked by such genuine fervor that the people purge Jerusalem (v. 14) and by such immense joy that after the festival of flatbread (vv. 13, 21–22) they elect to stay on for a second week of celebration (vv. 23–27).

As in the episode about Josiah, the *pesah* serves to rally the people in Jerusalem, orients them to the temple, and rededicates their attention to Yahweh, but in this case it also arouses great collective joy. The episode dramatizes the national dimension of the *pesah* in Num 9:1–14, highlighting the significance of all Israelites doing the *pesah* together, at the same time and in the same place. Concepts and categories of fixed divine presence, such as purity, ministering priests and Levites, slaughter, and exclusive attention on Yahweh all feature prominently, together with the definitive element of *Judges-Samuel-Kings*, royal sponsorship. Moreover, the *pesah* serves as the commencement of or preamble to the week-long festival of flatbread, or at least segues into it (note esp. 2 Chr 30:13, also vv. 21–22).

Despite all the apparent continuities with texts and concepts in the *Priestly History* and the impression of taking sides in their debates, the narrative in *Chronicles* diverges markedly. The concepts and categories of fixed divine presence deployed do not actually index divine presence, because *Chronicles* consistently locates the deity in the sky and makes the temple the place to invoke his name and gain his attention (e.g. 2 Chr 30:27).⁷³ The narrative does not allude to or draw upon the material or phraseology of Num 9:1–14 or Exod 12:1–28.⁷⁴ Nor does it signal correlation with the *pesah* presented in Moses' parting speech, at Deut 16:1–8, in its complete specifics, in its distinctive elements, or in its conceptualization. Namely, in presenting a temple-centered *pesah* followed by, or constituting the first day of, a week of flatbread, the narrative does not mean to adjudicate the debate waged within the Torah and determine the significance of the *pesah*. Rather, it presupposes the rallying

came to celebrate the feast of flatbread בַּחֹדֶשׁ הַשְּׁנִי (at 2 Chr 30:13) and they observed the *pesah* לַחֹדֶשׁ הַשְּׁנִי (v. 15) – it does not indicate the second month of the calendar year, but the second of the months being depicted, i.e., the next month (for this meaning, see Jonah Ibn Janah, *The Book of Roots (Sefer Hashorashim)* [Heb. trans., J. ibn Tibbon; ed. W. Bacher; Berlin: M'Kize Nirdamim, 1896; Jerusalem, 1966], 524–25; L. Koehler, W. Baumgartner, and J.J. Stamm, *The Hebrew and Aramaic Lexicon of the Old Testament: Study Edition* [trans. and ed. M.E.J. Richardson; 2 vols.; Leiden: Brill, 2002], 2.1604–05).

72 Likely, impurity from idolatry rather than corpse-contact; see Fishbane, *Biblical Interpretation*, 154, 156, 249; see further J. Klawans, *Impurity and Sin in Ancient Judaism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), 26–31.

73 The view already appears in Solomon's prayer and Yahweh's reply at the founding of the temple, within 1 Kgs 8:12–9:9, a segment of text reused in *Chronicles*, at 2 Chr 6–7. For the equivocating about or discomfort with full divine presence in *Chronicles*, compare the discussion of S. Japhet, *The Ideology of the Book of Chronicles and Its Place in Biblical Thought* (trans. A. Barber, 1989; repr. Winona Lake, Ind.: Eisenbrauns, 2009), 50–67.

74 On an illusory allusion in 2 Chr 30:3 to Num 9:6, see Chavel, *Oracular Law*, 152.

power of the *pesaḥ* for the purposes of Israelite nationhood, and delineates it sufficiently to that effect. Most strikingly, the narrative never orients the *pesaḥ* towards the past and Yahweh's foundational deeds. The joy emphasized seems entirely a function of the people's coming together to fulfill Yahweh's will; the paradox that the outpouring necessitates transgressing the purity norms that once derived from Yahweh's presence reinforces the primacy of national unity. The omission of the past, the emphasis on the joy of collective obedience, and the paradoxical necessity to forego impurity norms underscore the distinct use to which this history puts the *pesaḥ* as the sacrifice of nationhood *per se*.⁷⁵

One further set of hermeneutical impulses at work in the narrative merits attention. The idea to present Hezekiah on the model of Josiah, create a parallel event, and accent the event quite differently appears to derive from a perplexing set of correlations and remarks in *Kings*. The narrative in *Kings* portrays both Hezekiah and Josiah as figures who rededicated worship to Yahweh, and the narrator compares both, and only these two, to David as maximally and unwaveringly devoted to Yahweh (2 Kgs 18:3–6; 22:2 + 23:25), yet only Josiah held a collective sacrifice “as required” (by Deut 16:1–8), a *pesaḥ* event. Moreover, the narrator makes mutually exclusive claims about the unparalleled, singular excellence of each one, stating of Hezekiah that no one comparable arose afterwards (18:5) and of Josiah no one comparable had ever arisen (22:25). Evidently, this set of correlations and inconsistencies in *Kings* led the author of *Chronicles* in Talmudic fashion, first of all, to level the presentations of Hezekiah and Josiah so that each holds a *pesaḥ* for the purposes of national unity and, secondly, to vary the events such that each illustrates the singularity of its sponsoring king: Hezekiah brought about unique joy (2 Chr 30:21–27) and Josiah – punctilious performance (35:16–19). To the author of *Chronicles*, the salience of reenactment resides not in channeling the ideas or experiences of the past to the present, or reusing proven potent means for a threat in the present, but in the plastic power of repetition itself to adapt a form with pastness about it to the needs of the present.

Part III: Post-Biblical Sources

The Book of Jubilees

The book of *Jubilees*, which is commonly thought to have been authored in Palestine in the second cent. B.C.E., weaves the laws of the Pentateuch into the ancestral narratives of *Genesis* (and to some extent, of *Exodus*), presenting those laws as established and observed by the Patriarchs much before their delivery in Sinai. Within this framework, the *pesaḥ* laws of Exod 12 are of a unique standing: those are the only biblical laws that appear in a narrative sequence that the book of *Jubilees* includes in its own retelling. Put differently,

75 Compare already Japhet, *I & II Chronicles*, 1044–45.

the redactor of *Jubilees* ostensibly did not need to find a creative way to incorporate the *pesah* laws into the ancestral narrative, since they are already part of the biblical ancestral narrative that *Jubilees* presents (spanning from the creation of the world to the revelation in Sinai). Curiously, however, the *pesah* festival is integrated into *Jubilees*' narrative retelling *twice*: first, in chapter 18, it is presented as a festival established by Abraham after the fortunate ending of Isaac's near-sacrifice; then, in chapter 49, it is discussed in conjunction with the events of the plague of the firstborns and the exodus (as one might expect). We argue that the double rendition of this festival in the book of *Jubilees* is a creative interpretive response to the ambiguous nature of this festival, and mainly of the *pesah* sacrifice, as depicted in biblical sources. By breaking their treatment of the *pesah* into two parts, the authors/redactors of *Jubilees* were able to reconcile some biblical discrepancies and solve some of the inherent difficulties that were described above.

The author of the narrative sequence of *Jubilees*, who is careful to map out all biblical events onto a detailed calendar of days, months, "weeks" (seven-year cycles), and "jubilees," identifies God's call unto Abraham to sacrifice Isaac (Gen 22:2) as having taken place on the twelfth day of the first month (*Jub.* 17:15). Since Abraham and Isaac arrived at the designated place on the third day since this call, the *Akedah* itself took place, according to *Jubilees*' narrative, on the fourteenth of the first month – in other words, on the day in which the *pesah* sacrifice is to be performed at dusk. Through this dating scheme, *Jubilees* establishes a clear analogy between Isaac and the *pesah* sacrifice. In part, the biblical texts already lend themselves to this analogy (through the imagery of the lamb and the motif of the looming death of sons, averted only by the killing of an animal),⁷⁶ but this analogy is significantly enhanced by the author in *Jubilees*, who adds a few notable details to the biblical story in his own retelling. Most conspicuously, according to *Jubilees* it was the Adversary Angel (משטמה) who incited God to "test" Abraham in that manner (*Jub.* 17:16). While this addition likely derives from *Jubilees*' dualistic propensity to ascribe evil to a power other than God (here by utilizing a Job-like paradigm), the presence of the Adversary in this account echoes the threatening presence of the Destroyer (משיחית) during the night of the exodus.⁷⁷ Moreover, as Michael Segal pointed out, *Jubilees* specifically identifies the mountain on which the binding of Isaac took place as the Temple Mount (Mount Zion), thus alluding to the future practice of offering the *pesah* in Jerusalem.⁷⁸

76 On the intricate connection between the *pesah* and the *Akedah*, see J.D. Levenson, *The Death and Resurrection of the Beloved Son: The Transformation of Child Sacrifice in Judaism and Christianity* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1993), 3–18, 173–219.

77 See B. Halpern-Amaru, "The Festivals of Pesah and Massot in the Book of Jubilees," in *Enoch and the Mosaic Torah: The Evidence of Jubilees* (eds. G. Boccaccini and G. Ibba; Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 2009), 309–22; M. Segal, *The Book of Jubilees: Rewritten Bible, Redaction, Ideology, and Theology* (Jerusalem: Magnes Press, 2008), 149–59 (Hebrew).

78 Segal, *The Book of Jubilees*, 155.

Following the narrative account of these events, *Jub.* 18 concludes by relating that Abraham and his young men went to Beersheba, in which he celebrated a festival for seven days in joy and gratitude. He made this seven-day festival an annual occurrence, to mark the seven days of his journey to the Mountain of the Lord and back, and the observance of this festival then became a lasting ordinance for all of Israel, inscribed on the Tablets of Heaven (*Jub.* 18:17–19). These concluding verses gracefully offer a transition – as is the custom in *Jubilees* – from the narrative to the law, presenting the festival as commemorating the *Akedah*. However, as different scholars pointed out, the dates provided in the narrative do not quite compute with the paradigm of a week-long journey offered in the concluding passage. The festival associated with *pesah*, as we know, begins on the fifteenth and ends on the twenty-first of the first month; according to the narrative, Abraham’s journey began on the twelfth (and presumably ended on the eighteenth). Various solutions have been proposed to this conundrum,⁷⁹ but we are most persuaded by Michael Segal’s suggestion, according to which the narrative part and the legal conclusion are of different provenance: whereas for the author of the narrative part the critical day was the fourteenth, the day in which Isaac was almost sacrificed, the author of the legal part was interested in the seven-day festival as a whole.⁸⁰ In other words, the author of the narrative part plants the *pesah* sacrifice in the *Genesis* narrative, whereas the author of the legal part plants the *festival of unleavened bread* in the *Genesis* narrative. The discord within the redacted text of *Jub.* 17–18 serves as powerful indication that post-biblical interpreters still struggled to make those two separate festivals work together in a single scheme.

The question remains, however, why the authors/redactors of *Jubilees* trace the origin of the *pesah* back to the times of Abraham when they could so easily trace it to the exodus events, as the biblical text seems most plainly to do. One might argue that the implicit connections between the binding of Isaac and the *pesah* sacrifice were too notable to resist in this case, or that the stories of the Patriarchs had more cachet in the eyes of the authors, and those factors may indeed be part of the explanation for this choice. But it is also important to note that by setting the “original” *pesah* in the time of Abraham and not in the exodus night *Jubilees* is offering a solution to major ambiguities in the biblical texts.

According to *Jub.* 49:4–9, the Israelites in Egypt were not ordered to slaughter the *pesah* and eat it specifically in preparation for the plague of the firstborn: rather, they were celebrating a festival that was already instituted and established – presumably, from the time of Abraham. In other words, the *pesah* is in no way a commemoration of the events of the exodus night, but rather an already-existing festival during which the plague of the firstborn and the

79 See the elaborate survey and discussion in J. van Ruiten, *Abraham in the Book of Jubilees: The Rewriting of Genesis 11:26–25:10 in the Book of Jubilees* (Leiden: Brill, 2012), 222–26.

80 Segal, *The Book of Jubilees*, 156–59.

exodus *happened* to take place.⁸¹ To be more accurate, it is perhaps not a mere happenstance that the plague of the firstborn took place during the same time of year as the time in which Abraham was asked to sacrifice his child: what ties these two events together is the ominous presence of the Adversary מִשְׁטֵמָה, who both incited God to test Abraham and set out to destroy the firstborns in Egypt. The *pesah* of the Israelites in Egypt, then, is described in *Jub.* 49 as consisting of two separate parts: a celebratory feast including wine, meat, and praise for God (49:6), which we take as replicating the feast of Abraham, and an apotropaic ritual in which the blood of lambs is smeared on the doorframes as a sign for “the angels of God” to save the people inside the houses marked with blood (49:3). The latter part was unique to the conditions in Egypt on the night of the exodus; the former part was an annual occurrence.⁸²

The bifurcation of the *pesah* into a recurring feast and a one-time apotropaic ritual allows the author of *Jubilees*, first and foremost, to reconcile the tension between home-ritual and temple-ritual that looms large in the biblical texts.⁸³ The author of *Jubilees*, following Deut 16, stresses forcefully that once the Israelites arrive in their land they must offer the *pesah* only in the temple and may eat it only in the courtyards of the temple; the *pesah* must be offered like any other temple sacrifice, with the suet burnt on the altar and the blood tossed on its base (49:16–21). To maintain the identification of the *pesah* as a temple ritual, the biblical passages that portray the *pesah* as a household ritual are coopted into the account of the exodus night as one that required special apotropaic measures, and which bears no repetition. Furthermore, with its emphasis on wine, feast, and joy *Jubilees* casts the *pesah* as an ordinary thanksgiving offering suitable for a festival, and does away with the ambiguities surrounding the type and function of this offering in the Pentateuch.

Nevertheless, in *Jubilees*’ ordinances regarding the annual offering of the *pesah* a different dimension of this ritual surprisingly surfaces for a brief moment:

Now you order the Israelites to celebrate the passover each year during their times, once a year on its specific day. Then a pleasing memorial will come before the Lord and no plague will come upon them to kill and to strike (them) during that year when they have celebrated the passover at its time in every respect as it was commanded.⁸⁴

81 See also C. Werman and A. Shemesh, *Revealing the Hidden: Interpretation and Halakha in the Dead Sea Scrolls* (Jerusalem: Bialik Institute, 2011), 305–10 (Hebrew).

82 Halpern-Amaru, “The Festivals of Pesah and Massot,” 312–13; Segal, *The Book of Jubilees*, 160–69.

83 On *Jubilees*’ reconciliation of Exod 12 and Deut 16, see B. Amaru-Halpern, “The Use of Bible in Jubilees 49: The Time and Date of the Pesah Celebration,” *Meghillot* 5–6 (2007): 81–100; Werman and Shemesh, *Revealing the Hidden*, 298–305.

84 *Jub.* 49:15. Quoted from J.C. VanderKam, *The Book of Jubilees: A Critical Text* (Corpus scriptorum Christianorum Orientalium 510–511; Scriptores Aethiopici 87–88; Lovanii: E. Peeters, 1989), 2.321.

According to this verse, the *pesah* offering has a distinct protective function: it is meant to avert the “the plague” from the Israelites not only for the night in which it is offered (in which, one may infer, the Adversary Angel is particularly active) *but for the entire year*.⁸⁵ This notion interestingly corresponds with some of the conjectures regarding the nature of the *pesah* as a New Year apotropaic rite, and creates an implicit but undeniable connection between the occurrence unique to the *pesah* of Egypt – the marking of doorframes with blood – and the temple ritual as it is to be performed henceforth. *Jubilees* does not indicate what precisely in the sacrificial process serves this apotropaic function – whether it is the slaughter, the blood, the burning of suet, or the eating itself – but this comment does strongly showcase the fact that even in its sustained effort to circumvent the ambiguities of the *pesah*, *Jubilees* nonetheless brings some of these ambiguities back to the fore in a new way.

The same goes for *Jubilees*’ treatment of the duality of *pesah* and the festival of unleavened bread. In chapter 49, as Werman and Shemesh pointed out,⁸⁶ the author makes a point of distancing the festival of unleavened bread from the *pesah* and presenting them as two separate festivals. Indeed, whereas the *pesah* is emphatically not explained as a commemoration of the exodus in *Jub.* 49, the festival of unleavened bread is presented exactly as a festival commemorating those events, wholly separate from the *pesah*:

Now you, Moses, order the Israelites to keep the statue of the passover as it was commanded to you so that you may tell them its year each year, the time of the days, and the festival of unleavened bread so that they may eat unleavened bread for seven days to celebrate its festival, to bring its sacrifice before the Lord on the altar of your God each day during those seven joyful days. *For you celebrated this festival hastily when you were leaving Egypt until the time you crossed the sea into the wilderness...*⁸⁷

On the face of it, then, the author of *Jubilees* found an elegant solution to the confusing overlap of the *pesah* and the festival of unleavened bread: he presented the former as a sacrificial festival commemorating the *Akedah*, taking place on the fourteenth of the first month, and the latter as a completely unrelated seven-day festival starting on the fifteenth of the first month and commemorating the exodus. However, the separation of the two festivals was not executed flawlessly: as we noted above, the legal component of the *Akedah* account in *Jub.* 18 seems to establish not the *pesah*, but the festival of unleavened bread, as commemorating Abraham’s journey, thus attesting to a certain conflation of the two festivals. The fact that *Jubilees* effectively contains two stories of origin for the festival of unleavened bread, whether or not they stem from the same authorship, shows how biblical ambiguities resurface even in interpretive texts that put great effort into smoothing and clarifying those ambiguities.

85 See A. Shemesh, “What is this Passover about?” *AJS Review* 21:2 (1996): 8–11 (Hebrew).

86 Werman and Shemesh, *Revealing the Hidden*, 306–10.

87 *Jub.* 49:22–23. Quoted from VanderKam, *The Book of Jubilees*, 2.324–25.

Philo of Alexandria

The Jewish-Hellenistic philosopher Philo of Alexandria (ca. 20 B.C.E.–50 C.E.) discusses the *pesah* in three of his works: in *Questions and Answers on Exodus*, in *On the Special Laws*, and (briefly) in *The Life of Moses*. The different tenets and purposes of these works, and possibly also their different intended audiences, lead Philo to present a slightly different picture of the *pesah* in each of these works. In each work some of the *pesah*'s aspects are emphasized and others are left in the shadows. The discrepancies between Philo's three constructions of the *pesah* based on the biblical materials he had at his disposal, and probably also on his knowledge of the *pesah* rituals conducted in his own time, highlight the dualities and ambiguities we identified above. As we shall see, Philo attempts not only to resolve these ambiguities and to present as coherent an account as possible in each of the treatises, but also to utilize these ambiguities in order to put forth, as is his aim, an idealized picture of the Jewish religion.

Philo's most concise reference to the *pesah* is found in *Life of Moses*. The context here is "the second Passover" narrative, in which those who were impure on the designated day were not able to perform the *pesah* and asked Moses for help (Num 9). As Philo recounts these events, he explains/reminds his reader what the *pesah* is:

Accordingly, in this month, about the fourteenth day of the month... the public universal feast of the Passover is celebrated, which in the Chaldaic language is called pascha; at which festival *not only do private individuals bring victims to the altar and the priests sacrifice them, but also, by particular ordinances of this law, the whole nation is consecrated and officiates in offering sacrifice; every separate individual on this occasion bringing forward and offering up with his own hands the sacrifice due on his own behalf.* Therefore all the rest of the people [= at the time] rejoiced and was of joyful countenance, every one thinking that he himself was honoured by this participation in the priesthood.⁸⁸

Here Philo presents an unequivocal picture of the *pesah* as a temple ritual. What distinguishes the *pesah* from other sacrifices, according to Philo, is that the laypeople themselves officiate in the role usually reserved for the priests, and each person offers his sacrifice by himself (Philo uses the word χειρουργοῦντος, indicating that the lay people were the ones who dissected the animals and placed their organs on the altar), thereby becoming "a priest for a day." This claim is in accordance with the Mishnah's account of the *pesah* sacrifice, in which laypeople slaughter the animals themselves and then present them to the priests for the manipulation of blood,⁸⁹ and could possibly attest to what Philo knew to be the practice at the Jerusalem temple in his

88 *Life of Moses* II, 224–25. Quoted from C. Yonge, *The Works of Philo* (Peabody: Hendrickson Publishers, 2006), 511.

89 See *m. Pes* 5:5. *t. Pisha*. 4:11 similarly mentions that the people were in the habit of bringing their own knives to the Temple on Passover.

own time. But an examination of Philo's two other treatments of the *pesah* reveals that this notion of laypeople's participation in the priesthood was of critical importance to him, and was the key through which he attempted to resolve the incongruity between the two competing paradigms of the *pesah* – as household ritual or as temple ritual.

Philo's most detailed treatment of the *pesah* is in his *Questions and Answers on Exodus*, which includes a verse-by-verse discussion of Exod 12, introducing first a contextual explanation of the ordinances in the text and then an allegorical exegesis of these ordinances as pertaining to the workings of the soul. One of the issues to which Philo dedicates a significant amount of attention is the aberrant nature of the *pesah* performed in Egypt, namely, the fact that it was conducted at home and not in a temple, by each individual and not by the priests. He addresses this issue at length in his commentary on Exod 12:6b, "and the entire assembly of the Israelite congregation should slaughter it in the evening" (LXX: καὶ σφάζουσιν αὐτὸ πᾶν τὸ πλῆθος συναγωγῆς υἱῶν Ἰσραὴλ):

Now at other times the daily priests (chosen) from the people, being appointed for the slaughtering and taking care of them, performed the sacrifices. But at the Passover, here spoken of, the whole people together is honoured with the priesthood, for all of them act for themselves in the performance of the sacrifice. For what reason? Because, in the first place, it was the beginning of this kind of sacrifice, the Levites not yet having been elected to the priesthood nor a temple set up. And in the second place, because the Saviour and Liberator, Who alone leads out all men to freedom, deemed them (all) equally worthy of sharing in the priesthood and in freedom as well, since all who were of the same nation had given evidence of equal piety [...]. In the third place, because a temple had not yet been built. He showed that the dwelling together of several good persons in the home was a temple and altar, in order that in the first sacrifices of the nation no one might be found to have more than any other. In the fourth place, he thought it just and fitting that before choosing the particular priests He should grant priesthood to the whole nation in order that the part might be adorned through the whole, and not the whole through a part.⁹⁰

The passage makes it clear that for Philo, the *pesah* is fundamentally a temple ritual, comparable to other temple sacrifices (later on he will identify it specifically as an offering of thanksgiving),⁹¹ and that the household *pesah* in Egypt is the exception rather than the rule. However, Philo's tactic at explaining the domestic nature of the first *pesah* is intriguing, as he strives to construe it both as an aberration and as the paradigm at the same time. On the one hand, Philo explains plainly that the *pesah* in Egypt had to be offered at home and by the laypeople simply because there was no alternative, as the priesthood and the tabernacle were not yet established: one can only infer that had those institutions existed, the *pesah* would have been performed like any other sacrifice. In

90 Philo, *Questions and Answers on Exodus* (trans. R. Marcus; Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1953), 18–19.

91 Philo, *Questions and Answers on Exodus* 1.13, 22–23.

this regard, the *pesah* of Egypt is a flawed or lacking pre-enactment of the “real thing.” But on the other hand, Philo insists that the domestic nature of the first *pesah* was not a concession to historical constraints but a fully intended divine plan, designated as a form of initiation (of the people) and inauguration (of the sacrificial cult). By having each individual perform the sacrifice, Israel was effectively established as “a kingdom of priests” and by performing the sacrifices at home, each home became equivalent to a temple. In its capacity as the first collective sacrifice of the Israelites, the first *pesah*’s aberrant nature is explained by Philo not as the exception but as the rule, as encapsulating what he hails as the true essence of the Israelites and their cult: fully egalitarian and fully inclusive. From this perspective, the domestic *pesah* is not a flawed replica of a temple sacrifice, but quite the contrary: the temple sacrifice is only a shadow of the original, in which every person and every house is sanctified.

Philo uses the same notion of each private home functioning as a temple to explain another facet of the *pesah* in Exod 12 – the marking of the door-frames with blood. He completely ignores the biblical text’s comment that the blood will prevent the Destroyer from entering the houses, and interprets this practice as equivalent to the manipulation of blood upon the altar in ordinary sacrificial practices: “...at that time every house became an altar and a temple of God for the contemplative, wherefore He rightly deemed them worthy of making divine offerings of blood upon the front parts of each (house).”⁹² Here too we see Philo’s pincer movement around the problematics of the text, at the same time both insisting that temple, altar, and priests are crucial components of the *pesah* and extolling the original *pesah* (that ostensibly did not include those things) as the truest form of sacrifice. Philo thus quite impressively manages not only to interpret away some notable incongruities pertaining to the *pesah*, but also to use these incongruities to paint an idealized picture of the Israelite cult: on the one hand, this cult is fundamentally identical in its form and practices to that of any other civilized people (i. e., Greeks); but on the other hand this cult – or, more accurately, the foundational story of this cult – manifests the noblest values of equality, purity, and devotion in a way unique to this people alone.

Interestingly, what Philo described in *Questions and Answers on Exodus* as distinctive to the *pesah* of Egypt – namely, the function of each house as a temple – he describes in *On the Special Laws* as characteristic of the *pesah* as such. In Philo’s detailed account of the Jewish festivals Passover is the fourth festival he discusses (notably disparate from the festival of unleavened bread which he lists as the fifth festival), and it is depicted with great emphasis on the private home:

And after the feast of the new moon comes the fourth festival, that of the passover, which the Hebrews call pascha, on which the whole people offer sacrifice, beginning at noonday and continuing till evening. And this festival is instituted in remembrance

92 Philo, *Questions and Answers on Exodus* 1.12, 21–22.

of, and as giving thanks for, their great migration which they made from Egypt, with many myriads of people, in accordance with the commands of God given to them [...] they sacrificed at that time themselves out of their exceeding joy, without waiting for priests. And what was then done the law enjoined to be repeated once every year, as a memorial of the gratitude due for their deliverance [...] And each house is at that time invested with the character and dignity of a temple, the victim being sacrificed so as to make a suitable feast for the man who has provided it and of those who are collected to share in the feast, being all duly purified with holy ablutions [...] ⁹³

Here Philo presents the *pesah* as a commemorative ritual par excellence, effectively a re-enactment of the “original” *pesah* in Egypt. His depiction of the original *pesah*, however, is quite different from his account in *Questions and Answers on Exodus*: here the *pesah* of Egypt is described not as the faithful fulfillment of a divine ordinance but as a spontaneous outburst of joy and gratitude which could only be expressed in an impromptu offering of thanksgiving. It is curious that here Philo chose to explain the fact that each individual performs his own sacrifice – a notion that, as we saw, he also stresses in *The Life of Moses* – by saying that the people were too eager to wait for the priests rather than by saying that the priesthood did not yet exist. This choice plausibly stems from the different purposes of his works: whereas in *Questions and Answers* Philo works closely with the biblical text itself, in *On the Special Laws* he is more invested in establishing a certain ethos of Jewish piety at the expense of textual precision. ⁹⁴

What is more curious is that Philo is again expressing the idea that “each house is invested with the dignity of a temple” – but seemingly not in the context of the *pesah* of Egypt but rather of the *pesah* of his own times, while not indicating in any way that as a rule the *pesah* is performed at the centralized temple. This led several scholars to surmise that Philo is attesting here to a practice of performing the *pesah* in private homes in Alexandria of his days. ⁹⁵ Others assumed that in mentioning the sanctity of private houses Philo is alluding to the practice of consuming the paschal meat in private houses in the precincts of Jerusalem, as described in rabbinic literature. ⁹⁶ There is no reason, however, to take Philo’s account here, which is clearly idealized and tendentious, as reliable historical evidence: this account is best explained as an attempt to project what Philo identifies as the compelling ethos of the *pesah* of Egypt unto the recurring *pesah* celebration, without getting into the details of the actual performance. While in *Questions and Answers* Philo ventured to

93 *On the Special Laws* II, 145–49. Quoted from Yonge, *The Works of Philo*, 582.

94 On the different presentation of the *pesah* in these two texts as deriving from a difference in target audiences, see S. Belkin, “Philo of Alexandria’s Midrash of Questions and Answers on Genesis and Exodus and Its Relation to Palestinian Midrash,” *Horev* 14–15 (1960): 1–74, esp. 5–8 (Hebrew).

95 See, for example, E. P. Sanders, *Judaism: Practice and Belief 63 BCE–66 CE* (London: SCM Press, 1992), 133–34, and the discussion in Tabory, *The Passover Ritual*, 78–92.

96 See Tabory, *The Passover Ritual*, 83–84.

explain the discrepancy between the “original” *pesah* and the standardized temple rite, in *On the Special Laws* he circumvented this discrepancy altogether, creating an idealized picture of the *pesah* that does away with the ambiguities. Philo’s different strategies in presenting the *pesah* divulge both the continued challenge that the *pesah* presented to biblical interpreters, and the ways in which such interpreters were able to capitalize on the ambiguities and problematics of the texts in promoting their own agenda.

Flavius Josephus

Although Josephus’s extant works do not contain a sustained discussion of the *pesah* ritual, the Passover festival and the sacrificial practices it involves are mentioned in his works on multiple occasions, both in Josephus’s renditions of biblical celebrations of Passover (in the times of Joshua, Hezekiah, Josiah, and Ezra⁹⁷) and in his historical account of the Jews under Hasmonean and Roman rule.⁹⁸ In fact, Josephus provides what is perhaps the most reliable evidence we have on the manner in which the *pesah* was celebrated in the last decades before the destruction of the Jerusalem temple – mainly, he relates how each sacrifice was eaten within the precincts of Jerusalem in a group (φάρτια) of at least ten companions (*War* 6.9.3, 422–27). In his many references to the *pesah* Josephus identifies it as part of a festival that he sometimes calls “Passover” (πάσχα) and sometimes calls “the festival of unleavened bread” (ἡ ἑορτὴ τῶν ἄζυμων) indicating that he did not distinguish between the two festivals in any way.⁹⁹ He repeatedly explains this festival as commemorating the exodus from Egypt, although he does not elaborate in what manner and which of the festival’s customs are commemorative. In Josephus’s works the *pesah* sacrifice is always and by definition conducted at the Jerusalem temple¹⁰⁰ – to be sure, the *pesah* is mentioned so frequently in Josephus’s historical accounts since many of the political dramas he describes took place when Jerusalem was filled with pilgrims who came to offer the *pesah* at the temple. It stands to reason, then, that when Josephus is compelled in his *Antiquities of the Jews* to remark directly on the narrative of Exod 12 he would need to account for the

97 *Antiquities* 5.1.4 (20), 9.13.3 (271–272), 10.4.5 (70), 11.4.8 (109–111).

98 *Antiquities* 14.2.1–2 (21–28), 17.9.3 (213–214), 18.2.2 (29–30), 18.4.3 (90–95), 20.5.3 (106–112); *Wars* 2.1.3 (10), *Wars* 2.12.1 (224), 2.14.3 (280); 4.7.2 (402), 5.3.1 (98–99), 6.5.3 (290), 6.9.3 (423–427).

99 The rhetoric in *Antiquities* 18.2.2 (29) indicates that Josephus perceived the name “the festival of unleavened bread” as the one more familiar to non-Jews, and the name “Passover” as the internal Jewish appellation of the festival: “as the Feast of Unleavened Bread, which we call Passover, was being celebrated...” (τῶν ἄζυμων τῆς ἑορτῆς ἀγομένης, ἣν πάσχα καλοῦμεν).

100 It is possible, although far from certain, that Josephus provides evidence for the practice of *pesah* outside the temple during his time, before or after the destruction of the temple (see Sanders, *Judaism*, 134, and Tabory, *The Passover Ritual*, 99), but his explicit treatments of the Passover festival always involve the temple.

discrepancy between the household ritual implied in the biblical text and the *pesah* practices of his own time. Josephus's way of grappling with the discrepancy again brings to the fore the tensions and incongruities that we discussed above:

But when God had signified, that with one more plague he would compel the Egyptians to let the Hebrews go, he commanded Moses to tell the people that they should have a sacrifice (θυσίαν) ready, and that they should prepare themselves on the tenth day of the month Xanthicus, against the fourteenth [...] Accordingly, he having got the Hebrews ready for their departure, and having sorted the people into tribes (φαστριάς), he kept them together in one place: but when the fourteenth day was come, and all were ready to depart, they offered the sacrifice, and purified (ἡγνίζον) their houses with the blood, using bunches of hyssop for that purpose; and when they had supped, they burnt the remainder of the flesh, as just ready to depart. Whence it is that we do still offer this sacrifice in like manner to this day, and call this festival Pascha which signifies the feast of the Passover (ὑπερβάσια).¹⁰¹

Like Philo, Josephus is interested in presenting a direct continuity between the *pesah* of Egypt and the *pesah* of his own day, proclaiming that “to this day we still offer the sacrifice in like manner.” But whereas Philo extensively comments on the aberrant nature of the first *pesah* as a household ritual, Josephus transforms the domestic ritual into a centralized ritual. He does so in a very subtle way – by mentioning that Moses “sorted the people into tribes (φαστριάς) and gathered them together in one place.” Neither of those actions is in any way referred to in the biblical text, and it appears that Josephus adds this seemingly inconsequential detail exactly in order to liken the *pesah* in Egypt to the centralized *pesah* of the Jerusalem temple, which according to him was consumed, as mentioned above, in φαστριάς of ten or more.

While this modification allows Josephus to resolve the tension between the household model and the temple model, it leaves him with the problem of the blood on the doorframes. Josephus cannot explain this blood as part of the sacrificial process, as Philo does, since this would force him to identify the private household as the location of sacrifice, which he is reluctant to do. As Josephus is inclined to depict the Israelite religion as highly rational and devoid of superstitions, it is also understandable why he refrained from explaining the blood on the doorframes in an apotropaic manner, as suggested in *Jubilees* (and as indicated in Exod 12:13, 23). Rather, Josephus chooses a third path and explains the blood on the doorframes as serving a purifying purpose. Although the biblical account never explicitly refers to purification, the combination of blood and hyssop certainly lends itself to such interpretation, and Josephus seems to utilize this purificatory connotation in order to reject other possible readings of this rite.

101 *Antiquities* 2.14.6 (311–313). Quoted from W. Whiston (trans.), *The Works of Josephus* (Peabody: Hendrickson, 1987), 74–75.

While Josephus does not explain *why* such purification of the houses was in order, his reference to purification here does correspond with a recurrent emphasis, throughout his works, that only ritually pure people could partake in the *pesah* festival.¹⁰² This stipulation may have been especially important for Josephus because of the lingering myth according to which the Jews were expelled from Egypt due to their impurity, with which he grapples directly in book II of *Against Apion*,¹⁰³ but it seems to play more generally into the overarching theme of ritual purity as a marker of moral excellence in his writings. It seems, then, that Josephus utilizes the aspect of the *pesah* of Egypt that he could not square with his temple-centered account, the marking of the doorframes with blood, in order to highlight the aspect of purification that this festival entails. Josephus's reconstruction of the *pesah*, with its ever-so-slight discordances and modifications, again illustrates the inherent difficulties and tensions within the biblical *pesah* pericopes and their resonance in the work of later interpreters.

The New Testament

To the extent that the *pesah* is referenced and interpreted in the different books of the New Testament, it is almost exclusively in the context of the analogy between Jesus and the Paschal lamb. A close look at the different texts that present or reflect on this analogy, however, reveals not only a complex and multilayered picture, but also a resurgence of some of the dualities and ambiguities regarding the nature of the *pesah* that we discussed above. Most notably, New Testament texts bring to the fore the question of what *type* of sacrifice the *pesah* is, and, consequentially, what it accomplishes: is it essentially a wellbeing offering (שלמים), or a purification offering (חטאת)? Is it a vehicle of communion, or a vehicle of atonement? The Christological interpretation of Jesus's life and death in sacrificial terms crucially depends on the answer that different New Testament authors give to this question, and as we shall see, sometimes they conflate together more than one answer.

The association of Jesus with the *pesah* sacrifice is readily understood as a convergence of the timing and location of his death (in Jerusalem, around the Passover festival¹⁰⁴) with the sacrificial paradigms utilized to explain this death as valuable and efficacious.¹⁰⁵ But was this association mainly

102 See, for example, *Antiquities* 11.4.8 (109); *Wars* 5.3.1 (100), 6.9.3 (426), and see F. M. Colautti, *Passover in the Works of Josephus* (Leiden, Brill, 2002), 133–41.

103 On this prevalent Hellenistic myth, see P. Schaefer, *Judeophobia: Attitudes Towards the Jews in the Ancient World* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1997), 15–32.

104 While there is no reason to doubt that Jesus died around the Passover time, the gospels present conflicting versions regarding the exact date of his death. On the complexity of dating the crucifixion see S. McKnight, *Jesus and His Death: Historiography, the Historical Jesus, and Atonement Theory* (Waco: Baylor University Press, 2005), 260–75.

105 On the use of sacrificial paradigms in the New Testament, see G. Heyman, *The Power of Sacrifice: Roman and Christian Discourses in Conflict* (Washington D.C.: The Catholic University of America Press, 2007), 95–160.

coincidental in nature (that is, Jesus is a *pesah* sacrifice insofar as he was “sacrificed” on Passover, but not beyond that), or did it actually involve a construction of Jesus’ mission in the terms of the biblical or post-biblical *pesah*? Whereas in the Synoptic Gospels the paschal dimension of Jesus is only implicit and maintained primarily through the context, in the letters of Paul and in the Gospel of John we see more sustained attempts to apply the template(s) of the biblical *pesah* to Jesus, thereby revealing the divergences within this template.

Paul explicitly refers to Jesus as “our *pesah*” (τὸ πάσχα ἡμῶν) in 1 Corinthians 5:7, in a diatribe that invokes the imagery of unleavened bread to convey the moral transformation required of the community:

Your boasting is not a good thing. Do you not know that a little yeast leavens the whole batch of dough? Clean out the old yeast so that you may be a new batch, as you really are unleavened. For our paschal lamb, Christ, has been sacrificed (ἐτύθη). Therefore, let us keep our feast (ἐορτάζωμεν), not with the old yeast, the yeast of malice and evil, but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth.¹⁰⁶

Paul’s uses the verb ἐορτάζω, plainly translated as “to celebrate,” the word regularly used in the Septuagint to denote the observance of festivals. He may even be specifically echoing the injunction in Exod 12:14 regarding the festival of unleavened bread, “throughout your generations you shall observe it” (LXX: πάσας τὰς γενεὰς ὑμῶν... ἐορτάσετε αὐτήν). However, as the context makes clear, Paul does not exhort his audience to observe the seven-day festival in actuality, but rather claims that the *pesah*-like sacrifice of Jesus enables them, in some way, to observe this festival spiritually in a perfected manner. What is the relation between the sacrifice and the “celebration,” such that one allows for the other? While Paul’s rhetoric is not easy to fathom, he seems to suggest two levels of relation here. On one level, the verb ἐορτάζω (like its Hebrew equivalent חג) strongly connotes “feast,” that is, the communal sharing of food and drink.¹⁰⁷ More specifically, it connotes a sacrificial banquet, in which meat is shared after a portion of the animal has been offered to the deity.¹⁰⁸ The causative relation in the sentence “our paschal lamb, Christ, has been sacrificed; therefore, let us keep our feast” can thus be interpreted through the paradigm of the wellbeing offering (שלמים), in which the death of the animal produces a meal for the worshippers, who partake in it in the presence of God. This interpretation is in keeping with Paul’s explanation of sacrifice as a form of communion with the deity in which “those who eat the sacrifices [are] part-

106 1 Cor 5:6–8, NRSV.

107 See, for example, LXX for 1 Sam 30:16, “When he had taken him down, they were spread out all over the ground, eating and drinking and feasting (ἐσθίοντες καὶ πίνοντες καὶ ἐορτάζοντες).”

108 This is most notable, perhaps, in Ps 42:4: “How I used to go with the crowd, and led them to the house of God, with the voice of joy and praise, a multitude keeping a holy day” (LXX: ἐξομολόγησεως ἡχοῦ ἐορτάζοντος).

ners (κοινωνοί) in the altar” (1 Cor 10:18).¹⁰⁹ On another level, however, Paul does not simply note that the community can now feast, but specifically states that they can now feast “with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth,” since they are now “unleavened” (ἄζυμοι). This suggests that the function of Jesus’s sacrifice was the removal of yeast, here standing for malice and immorality, from his followers.

It appears, then, that Paul is simultaneously depicting Jesus’s function as a *pesah* sacrifice both in terms of a wellbeing offering *and* in terms of a purification offering: his death is efficacious both in creating communion among believers and in removing impurity. While one could say that Paul is simply mixing his metaphors and conflating two different kinds of offerings here, we propose that Paul is working with an ambiguity that is present in the biblical text itself, in which the *pesah* seems to serve both as a communal meal and as a cleansing agent.

In the Synoptic Gospels, Jesus is never overtly analogized to the *pesah* sacrifice, despite the emphasized dating of his death to the Passover day. However, the authors make notable efforts to cast the last supper – the account of which seems to have originally been unrelated to Passover¹¹⁰ – distinctly as a paschal feast. Mark (and correspondingly, Matthew) mentions that the meal took place on the Passover eve three times¹¹¹; Luke mentions this six times.¹¹² When pronounced in the setting of a *Pesah* feast, Jesus’s famous words to his disciples “Take, this is my body [...] This is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many”¹¹³ acquire an additional meaning, establishing parity between what the disciples are currently consuming – the *pesah* meat – and Jesus’ metaphorical offering of his own flesh and blood. The *pesah* imagery thus serves not only to strengthen the notion of the last supper as a shared meal that generates a covenantal partnership, but also to integrate Jesus’s sacrificial function into the scene. Nevertheless, the parity between Jesus and the *pesah* remains only implicit in the Synoptic Gospels, and in all likelihood reflects an editorial attempt to integrate an already-existing view of Jesus as a paschal sacrifice into a narrative that did not originally feature this idea.

In contrast, in the Gospel of John the notion of Jesus as the paschal sacrifice is unequivocal and highly prominent. Indeed, in John’s account Jesus’s crucifixion is dated not to the first day of Passover, as it is in the Synoptic Gospels, but rather to the previous day (the fourteenth of Nisan), thus corresponding with the slaughtering of the paschal lambs (John 18:28). Moreover, the manner in which Jesus is killed is explicitly compared with the manner in which the

109 On the perception of sacrifice as shared meal in the letters of Paul, see W.L. Willis, *Idol Meat in Corinth: The Pauline Argument in 1 Corinthians 8 and 10* (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1985).

110 See the discussion in McKnight, *Jesus and His Death*, 260–75.

111 Mark 14:12, 14, 16; cf. Matthew 26:17, 18, 19.

112 Luke 22:7, 8, 11, 12, 13, 15.

113 Matthew 26:26–28, Mark 14:22–24, Luke 22:17–20.

pesah is prepared, following the injunction “you shall not break any bone in it” (Exod 12:46):

Then the soldiers came and broke the legs of the first and of the other who had been crucified with him. But when they came to Jesus and saw that he was already dead, they did not break his legs. Instead, one of the soldiers pierced his side with a spear, and at once blood and water came out [...] These things occurred so that the scripture might be fulfilled, “None of his bones shall be broken.”¹¹⁴

Beyond the clear identification of Jesus’s crucifixion with the *pesah* sacrifice, what function does the author of John attribute to the paschal-like sacrifice of Jesus? Whereas the Synoptic Gospels seem to point mainly to the covenant generated by the shared meal with/of Jesus, and Paul seems to be invoking both an imagery of feast and a notion of purification, John casts Jesus’s sacrifice exclusively as a sacrifice of *atonement*. The statement attributed to John the Baptist in John 1:29, “behold the lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world” (ἴδε ὁ ἀμνὸς τοῦ Θεοῦ ὁ αἴρων τὴν ἁμαρτίαν τοῦ κόσμου)¹¹⁵ molds together two separate biblical tropes: on the one hand, the imagery of the lamb, which is strongly associated with both the *pesah* and the *Akedah*, and on the other hand, the notion of sacrifice as affecting a removal of sins, which is pertinent to the Levitical *hattat* paradigm. Of course, the idea that Jesus’s death and specifically his blood affected atonement in a *hattat*-like manner is not unique to the Gospel of John, and arguably already appears in the letters of Paul.¹¹⁶ However, whereas other New Testament texts develop the notion of Jesus’s atoning function mainly through the thematics of the Day of Atonement,¹¹⁷ John associates this atoning function with the “lamb of God,” thus tying it to the *pesah* /*Akedah* trope: here, Jesus atones in his capacity as a paschal lamb.¹¹⁸

While scholars claimed that the author of John is conflating Passover and the Day of Atonement together to serve his theological agenda,¹¹⁹ we propose

114 John 19:32–36, NRSV.

115 The identification of Jesus as “the lamb of God” recurs in John 1:36; it is also highly prominent in the Book of Revelation. See Heyman, *The Power of Sacrifice*, 135–45.

116 See the discussion in B. H. McLean, “The Absence of Atoning Sacrifice in Paul’s Soteriology,” *NTS* 38 (1992): 531–53.

117 The depiction of Jesus’s self-sacrifice through the imagery of the Day of Atonement is particularly developed in the Epistle to the Hebrews (especially chapters 6–10). However, this idea is already present in the Gospels’ crucifixion narrative, which strongly alludes to the scapegoat of Lev 16. See D. Stökl Ben Ezra, *The Impact of Yom Kippur on Early Christianity* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2003), 147–55.

118 Note that in Matthew’s account of the last supper it is specifically mentioned that the blood of Jesus is spilled “for the forgiveness of sins” (εἰς ἄφεσιν ἁμαρτιῶν). This insertion demonstrates the melting together of Jesus’s function as communion and as atoning sacrifice, again manifested in the context of *pesah*.

119 J. Siker, “Yom Kippuring Passover: Recombinant Sacrifice in Early Christianity,” in *Ritual and Metaphor: Sacrifice in the Bible* (ed. Christian A. Eberhart; Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2011), 65–82.

that this author, like Paul but much more forcefully and noticeably, makes use of the ambiguity regarding the *pesah* that is already present in the biblical text itself. The prominence of blood in the *pesah* pericope in Exod 12, its association with cleansing and purification, and the transformation in the status of the Israelites following the sacrifice, leave open the possibility of reading the *pesah* as a purification offering, a possibility at which Paul hints and John fully embraces. If our reading is correct, we see here a powerful indication of the malleability and interpretability of the *pesah* even among circles who had little interest in the actual practice of the *pesah* sacrifice per se and were interested in it primarily on a metaphorical or figurative level.

Rabbinic Literature

The *pesah* is discussed extensively in numerous rabbinic texts – in dozens of passages and comments in the Mishnah, Tosefta, halakic midrashim, and the two Talmuds – in which the *pesah*'s different components, from the selection and slaughter of sacrificial animals to their modes of cooking and disposal, receive close scrutiny that often involves dissent and disagreement among different names rabbis. The multifaceted treatment and development of the *pesah* in the different corpora of rabbinic literature merits a monograph of its own, and in the confines of this article we would like to focus only on a single controversy that pervades the different rabbinic compilations. This controversy concerns the question of which action defines (and effectively completes) the *pesah* sacrifice – the manipulation of blood or the consumption of meat. Underlying this controversy is the question of the essence and function of the *pesah* – both in its “original” setting (in Egypt) and in its annual performance in the temple that the rabbis posit to be the norm. This controversy captures, we argue, the extent to which the exact nature of the *pesah* remained an open question – even as late as the second and third centuries C. E.

Whereas different biblical and post-biblical authors attempt to reconcile the competing models of household ritual and temple ritual, and venture to find elegant ways either to account for or smoothen the discrepancies between the two, the rabbis present a remarkably straightforward solution to the problem. Instead of predicating one model on the other, they put forth the notion that there are simply two different kinds of *pesah*: “The *pesah* of Egypt” (פסח מצרים) and “the *pesah* of the generations” (פסח דורות). The two, it is made clear, are different rituals in essence and are subject (at least in part) to different rules. Thus in the midst of the Mishnah's instructions regarding the *pesah* ritual as it ought to be performed in the temple, there appears a short list of differences between the *pesah* as performed in Egypt and the *pesah* as performed thereafter:

The [animal designated for] the *pesah* of Egypt is selected on the tenth [of the month of Nisan, whereas animals for the *pesah* sacrifice thereafter can be selected at any

time],¹²⁰ and [the *pesah* sacrifice in Egypt] requires sprinkling with a bunch of hyssop on the lintel and the two doorposts,¹²¹ and it is eaten in haste,¹²² and [the Passover festival in Egypt lasts only] one night,¹²³ whereas the Passover of the generations lasts all seven days.¹²⁴

A much longer and more complete list of differences between the two types of *pesah* appears in a parallel Tosefta passage, which mentions among other things that “the *pesah* of Egypt did not require an offering of blood and suet upon the altar, which is not the case for the *pesah* of the generations¹²⁵ [...] In the *pesah* of Egypt each and every one slaughters inside his own home, whereas in the *pesah* of the generations all of Israel slaughter in one place.”¹²⁶

These lists of differences are not merely the result of a mechanical compare-and-contrast between Exod 12 and the temple model of the *pesah* that the rabbis were familiar with, but reflect a bold and innovative view according to which the *pesah* performed in Egypt was an idiosyncratic type of sacrifice. It is neither the paradigm for the temple ritual (as Josephus claims) nor a lacking or aberrant version of the temple ritual (as Philo claims), but a sacrificial category in its own right, all components of which are equally pertinent and required for the fulfillment of the commandment. Most notably, the *Mekiltot* (the tannaitic midrashim to the book of *Exodus*) make clear that the marking of the doorframes with blood was not – as suggested in *Jubilees* – a protective activity unrelated to the *pesah* sacrifice as such, but an integral part of the manner in which the *pesah* of Egypt as a type of sacrifice had to be performed, and there were exact rules as to how to apply the blood, in what order, which hyssop to use, etc., that had to be followed that night.¹²⁷ Similarly, the Mishnah

120 Cf. *Mek. R. Ish. Pisha* 3 (H.S. Horovitz and Y.A. Rabin, eds., *Mekhilta de-rabbi ishmael* [2nd ed.; Jerusalem: Wahrman Books, 1970], 10–11); *Mek. R. Shim.* 12:3 (J.N. Epstein and E.Z. Melamed, eds. *Mekhilta de-rabbi shimon ben yohai* [Jerusalem: Mekitse Nirdamim, 1955], 9); cf. *Mek. R. Ish. Pisha* 5 (ed. Horovitz-Rabin, 16).

121 *Mek. R. Ish. Pisha* 11 (ed. Horovitz-Rabin, 39); *Mek. R. Shim.* 12:24 (ed. Epstein-Melamed, 26).

122 Following Exod 12:11. Cf. *Mek. R. Ish. Pisha* 7 (ed. Horovitz-Rabin, 23); *Mek. R. Shim.* 12:11 (ed. Epstein-Melamed, 14).

123 The Mishnah’s phrasing “one night” is rather cryptic. Parallel passages in other rabbinic compilations suggest that this ruling refers to the eating of unleavened bread, which according to some opinions applied only for one day in Egypt, whereas thereafter it applies for seven days: see *t. Pisha* 8:8; *Mek. R. Ish. Pisha* 16 (ed. Horovitz-Rabin, 62); *Mek. R. Shim.* 13:3 (ed. Epstein-Melamed, 38); *y. Pesah* 9:5, 37a; *b. Pesah* 96b. See also S. Lieberman, *Tosefta kifshuta: Mo’ed: Volume 4* (New York: Jewish Theological Seminary Press, 1962), 630.

124 *m. Pesah.* 9:5. Translation of rabbinic texts by M. Balberg.

125 The (apparent) absence of a standard sacrificial ritual in the *pesah* of Egypt is poignantly expressed in an exchange brought forth in *b. Pesah* 96a: “R. Zeira asked: where did they burn the suet of the *pesah* of Egypt? Abaye replied to him: and who is to tell us that they did not prepare [it in the form of] skewers?”

126 *t. Pisha* 8:11–17.

127 *Mek. R. Ish. Pisha* 11 (ed. Horovitz-Rabin 37–38); cf. *Mek. R. Shim.* 12:22 (ed. Epstein-Melamed, 25–26).

stipulates that the *pesah* of Egypt “requires (טעון) sprinkling with a bunch of hyssop on the lintel and the two doorposts” – a common rabbinic legal formula that indicates that the *pesah* sacrifice in Egypt would not have been *valid* had the lintels and doorposts not been sprinkled. On the face of it, then, the rabbis found an effective way to resolve the ambiguities surrounding the *pesah*: they simply turned the household ritual into “its own thing,” allowing all its different aspects to constitute an independent sacrificial category that ostensibly has no bearing on the temple ritual. Nevertheless, upon a closer look at the rabbis’ discussions of the *pesah* as a temple sacrifice it becomes evident that the nature and function of the “*pesah* of the generations” was far from being clear to them or agreed upon, and that the uncertainties and dualities of the *pesah* in the biblical texts continued to animate their teachings and rulings.

Various rabbinic sources make it clear that the primary purpose of the *pesah* is to be eaten, and therefore it is to be offered even if the majority of the people are ritually impure at the time.¹²⁸ Moreover, unlike in other wellbeing offerings, one may proceed with the *pesah* sacrifice even if the suet that is to be burned on the altar has disappeared or became impure, since the *pesah* “is not offered except to be eaten” (לֹא בֹא אֵלָא לְאֹכִילָהּ).¹²⁹ The *pesah* is so fundamentally defined by its consumption, that one must slaughter it specifically “for its eaters” (לְאֹכְלָיו) – that is, with an active thought of those who plan to eat of a particular paschal animal together¹³⁰ – and one may not join such an eating-group (חבורה) unless he or she is able to eat at least an olive-volume of meat.¹³¹ This emphasis on eating and on partaking in the sacrificial meat as the definitive aspect of the *pesah* ritual indicates that the model of the household ritual still looms large for the rabbis even when discussing the temple ritual. The biblical passages that portray the *pesah* as a household ritual emphasize that it is eaten in its entirety by the owners, and in fact the ritual seems to consist of nothing *but* eating (if we set aside for the moment the application of blood to the doorframes). The rabbinic notion that the individual’s obligation in regard to the *pesah* is essentially its consumption seems to derive directly from the household model.

However, a series of rabbinic controversies regarding the “second *pesah*” – that is, the requirement that those who were not able to perform the *pesah* during its designated time perform it in the following month – reveals a more complex picture. Although all agree that the *pesah* is in essence an offering designated for eating, not all agree that it must *actually* be eaten for the successful fulfillment of the commandment. Rather, some rabbis maintain that it is the manipulation of the animal’s blood, and not the consumption of its

128 *m. Pesah.* 7:4.

129 *t. Pisha* 6:4.

130 *m. Pesah.* 5:3, 6:6; *t. Pisha* 4:2.

131 *m. Pesah.* 8:6, *Mek. R. Ish. Pisha* 3 (ed. Horovitz-Rabin, 12).

meat, that marks the completion of the ritual. At the core of these controversies, which are presented in Tosefta *Pisha* chapter 7, stands the rule that when the *pesah* offering is sacrificed it must be fit for its prospective eaters (that is, there should be enough of it for all of them to eat at least a little) and its eaters must be fit for it (that is, they must be ritually pure and healthy enough to partake in it). The question at hand is what happens if something has changed between the time of sacrifice (which includes slaughter and manipulation of blood) and the actual meal, such that a prospective eater is now unable to partake in the meal. Is this person required to perform the “second *pesah*” in the following month since he or she is seen as having not properly performed the *pesah* the first time, or is this unnecessary?

The first case the Tosefta discusses (in conjunction with *m. Pesah* 8:2) is of a servant who could not remember whether his master told him to slaughter a lamb or a kid for the *pesah*, and so he slaughtered both. Since as a rule a sacrificial animal must be slaughtered “at the will of the owner,” one of those two animals is considered a sacrifice without owners and must therefore be incinerated (unless the servant, after finding out what the master originally wanted, claims the other animal for himself). If the master does not remember whether he asked for a kid or a lamb, both animals are considered ownerless and must be incinerated. The Tosefta presents a disagreement on the outcome of such a turn of events:

[...] If his master has forgotten what he told [the servant], both [the kid and the lamb] must be incinerated, and [those who planned to eat of this offering] must perform the second *pesah*. R. Nathan says: they need not perform the second *pesah*, for the blood was already tossed [on the altar] for them.¹³²

According to the anonymous voice in the Tosefta, since no one was able to eat of this *pesah* because the animals had to be incinerated, those who were planning to eat of it did not fulfill their obligation and must repeat the *pesah* again. According to Rabbi Nathan, however, the fact that the sacrificial process itself was completed with the action of tossing of blood on the altar, which was done for the sake of those planning to eat, suffices as fulfillment of the *pesah* obligation.¹³³

The same disagreement is replicated in the following passage, which discusses a case in which the number of people who agreed to partake in a single paschal animal was greater than the number that the animal could feed. The Tosefta distinguishes between two cases: in the first case, the number of potential eaters was initially (i. e., when the group was first formed) too great for the animal to feed, and in this case the sacrifice is inherently invalid. In the second case, the number of potential eaters was still small enough for the ani-

132 *t. Pisha* 7:5.

133 Interestingly, in *m. Pes* 8:2 the anonymous (and only) ruling regarding this case is identical with R. Nathan’s minority ruling in the Tosefta (i. e., that they are exempt from performing the second *pesah*).

mal to feed when the group was first formed, but later on more potential eaters joined the group, thereby making the animal insufficient. In such a case –

[...] the first ones [=the initial members of the group], who have [enough food] will eat [of the meat], and those who joined later will not eat, and they must perform the second *pesah*. R. Nathan says: they need not perform the second *pesah*, for the blood was already tossed for them.¹³⁴

As in the previous case, Rabbi Nathan maintains, in contrast to the anonymous Tosefta, that those who were unable to eat still fulfilled their obligation as far as the *pesah* is concerned, since they were included in the sacrifice when the blood was tossed.

The same principle, according to which it is the tossing of blood and not the actual eating that constitutes the fulfillment of the *pesah* obligation, is applied to a case of a woman who was considered ritually pure while the blood was tossed for her, but between the tossing of blood and the consumption of the meat discovered that she is menstruating. In such a case, R. Yose ben Yehuda rules that although she may not eat of the paschal meat, “she is exempt from performing the second *pesah*, for she has already fulfilled her obligation through the tossing [of blood].”¹³⁵

An echo of the controversy regarding the action that fulfills the *pesah* obligation – whether it is eating or blood manipulation – can be found in a rabbinic dispute on the meaning of the phrase “distant road” (דרך רחוקה) in Num 9:10. This verse prescribes that any person who was unable to perform the *pesah* at its time since he or she were impure or on a journey (“on a distant road”) is to perform the second *pesah* in the following month. In *m. Pesah* 9:2, R. Eliezer and R. Akiba disagree on the point from which distance is measured to determine that one was on “a distant road”: according to R. Akiba, this point is Modi’in at the outskirts of Jerusalem, while according to R. Eliezer this point is the threshold of the temple’s court. As the Tosefta explains, the first opinion is guided by the view that it is distance from the place in which the *pesah* is eaten (i. e., Jerusalem) that matters, whereas the second opinion is guided by the view that it is distance from the place in which the sacrifice is performed (i. e., the temple) that matters.¹³⁶

Whereas in the Mishnah and Tosefta the view of the tossing of blood as the decisive aspect of the *pesah* is presented as the controversial opinion of individuals, in the midrash *Sifre Zuṭa* to *Numbers* this position is presented anonymously, without a hint of dispute, in the statement “all those for whom

134 *t. Pisha* 7:6.

135 *t. Pisha* 7:13.

136 *t. Pisha* 8:2. In the Tosefta, however, the attribution of opinions is reversed – R. Akiba is identified as prioritizing the place of “performing” the Passover (*asiyah*) whereas R. Eliezer is identified as prioritizing the place of consumption (*akhila*). Cf. *Sifre* § 69 (H. S. Horovitz, ed., *Sifre ‘al sefer Ba-midbar ve-sifre zuṭa* [Jerusalem: Wahrmann Books, 1966; repr., Jerusalem: Shalem, 1992], 64).

the blood was not tossed must perform the second *pesah*.¹³⁷ This emphasis on the manipulation of blood in the *pesah* rather than on the eating of meat is especially striking in the *Sifre Zuṭa*'s midrashic commentary on Num 9:7, in which verse those who were impure when the *pesah* was performed are requesting an opportunity to offer it. The people's request "why must we be kept from presenting the Lord's offering at its appointed time among the Israelites" is explained in the *Sifre Zuṭa* in the following words: "It is not that we request eating and drinking, but rather that the blood be tossed for us."¹³⁸ This wording leaves no room for doubt that for the homilist here, eating is just a pleasant fringe benefit of the *pesah* whereas its core and essence is in the tossing of blood, and moreover, it is from the tossing of blood that the people derive true benefit. A similar exegesis of the same verse appears in *Sifre to the book of Numbers*, in which the impure persons protest their inability to partake in the *pesah* by saying to Moses "let the blood be tossed for the impure ones, and the meat be eaten by the pure ones."¹³⁹ Perhaps the most radical take on the *pesah* found in rabbinic sources, which completely elides the aspect of the meal from this sacrifice, is the statement attributed to R. Eliezer: "even if all of Israel have only a single *pesah* (i. e., one paschal animal), all of them can fulfill their obligation through it."¹⁴⁰ Underlying this statement, as the Palestinian Talmud explains, is the view that "they fulfill their obligation through tossing [of blood], with no [need for] eating."¹⁴¹

Wherefrom emerged this view of the manipulation of blood on the altar as the most critical component of the *pesah*, which effectively obviates its consumption? In part, this view can be identified as part of a more overarching tendency in the rabbinic legislative interpretation of animal sacrifice, to marginalize aspects of eating and drinking in the sacrificial ritual and to highlight the correct performance of the actions pertaining to blood. This tendency may stem from the rabbis' attempt to construct Jewish sacrifice in opposition to Hellenistic and Roman sacrificial rituals that entailed elaborate and often raucous banquets. In the context of the *pesah*, however, the controversy on eating versus blood-manipulation clearly maps onto the incongruities and tensions within the biblical account of the *pesah* in Exod 12. On the one hand, in this account the Israelites do not perform any altar-related actions – no tossing of blood, no burning of suet – but are only commanded to eat it, and to eat it in its entirety, which is not the case for any other offering. This does suggest that

137 *Sifre Zuṭ* Num. 9:10 (ed. Horovitz, 259).

138 *Sifre Zuṭ* Num 9:7 (ed. Horovitz, 259).

139 *Sifre* § 68 (ed. Horovitz, 63).

140 *Mek. R. Ish. Pisha* 5 (ed. Horovitz-Rabin, 17). R. Eliezer's comment ties to a greater controversy pervasive in rabbinic literature on whether the *pesah* is an individual offering (קרבן יחיד) or a congregational offering (קרבן ציבור) which cannot be addressed in the confines of this article. On this debate, see D. Henshke, *Festival Joy in Tannaitic Teachings* (Jerusalem: Magnes Press, 2007), 125–45.

141 *y. Pesah.* 7:5, 34b; cf. *b. Pesah.* 78b, *b. Qidd.* 42a. In the Palestinian Talmud this statement is attributed to R. Nathan rather than to R. Eliezer.

the efficacious aspect, if such exists, of the *pesah* lies in its consumption.¹⁴² On the other hand, the account in Exod 12 also makes clear that what effectively protected the Israelites on that night were the blood markings on the doorframes, thus leaving open for interpretation the question which is at the center and which is at the margins: is the paschal meat the critical component and the blood just a practical means of marking the doors, or is the blood the critical component and the meat is just a way of providing sustenance for the Israelites on that long night and keeping them in their homes? It is these interpretive questions, we argue, that underlie the controversies we have seen above.

The question remains what the blood of the *pesah* exactly does according to those who present it as the most critical component of the ritual – either in Egypt or thereafter. While this question is not addressed directly in rabbinic sources, the *Mekilta of Rabbi Ishmael* indicates that the use of blood was interpreted, at least by some rabbis, as equivalent to the manipulation of blood on the altar,¹⁴³ and more specifically, to the manipulation of blood in rites of purification.¹⁴⁴ In the *Mekilta's* elaborate commentary on the way in which the blood application was performed, the biblical instruction “and dab the lintel and the two doorposts with the blood that is on the threshold” (Exod 12: 22) is read as stipulating that the bunch of hyssop be dipped in the blood three times, before being applied to each of the sides of the door, or in the *Mekilta's* words, “for every touching, a dipping” (על כל הגעה טבילה).¹⁴⁵ This phrase is almost identical to the formulaic phrase “for every sprinkling, a dipping” (על כל הזאה טבילה) used in rabbinic texts to describe the purificatory procedure of sprinkling blood on the altar, in which the priest is required to dip his finger in blood anew before each “flicking” of blood.¹⁴⁶ The same formula, “for every

142 The notion that the consumption of the *pesah* meat itself serves a protective function is implicit in a statement attributed to R. Yose: “The enemies of Israel (= euphemism for Israel) were worthy of destruction in Egypt until the last of them finished his *pesah*” (*Mek. R. Ish. Pisha* 12 [ed. Horovitz-Rabin, 42]). See Shemesh, “What is this Passover About.”

143 The doorframes of the Israelites’ houses in Egypt are explicitly analogized to altars in the *Mekilta*: “Our ancestors had three altars in Egypt: the lintel and the two doorposts. R. Ishmael says: there were four, the threshold (*sap*) and the lintel and the doorposts.” *Mek. R. Ish. Pisha* 6, 11 (ed. Horovitz-Rabin, 18, 37); see also *b. Pesah.* 96a. R. Ishmael’s interpretation is consistent with his interpretation of the word סף as threshold, which disagrees with R. Akiba’s interpretation of the word as vessel or basin (*ibid.*). R. Akiba’s interpretation may also stem from an attempt to liken the manipulation of blood in Egypt to a standard sacrificial procedure.

144 The notion that the blood serves an apotropaic function is entirely dismissed in the *Mekilta*, and instead the application of blood is explained strictly in terms of a faithful fulfillment of a commandment: “R. Ishmael used to say: And is not everything known and revealed before Him? [...] Why does Scripture say: ‘And I will see the blood?’ As a reward for the commandment that you are performing, I will reveal myself and protect you.” *Mek. R. Ish. Pisha* 7, 11 (ed. Horovitz-Rabin, 24, 38–39); see also *Tg. Ps.-J. Exod* 12:13, and cf. *Mek. R. Shim.* 17:11 (ed. Epstein-Melamed, 121).

145 *Mek. R. Ish. Pisha* 11 (ed. Horovitz-Rabin, 37–38).

146 *t. Kipp.* 3:2; *Sipra Hoba* 3.3.8 (I. H. Weiss, ed., *Sipra de-bei rav* [Vienna: Schlossberg, 1862; New York: repr. Om Publishing, 1946], 17b).

sprinkling, a dipping” is also used in the rabbinic accounts of the rite of the red cow¹⁴⁷ and the rite of the purification of the leper,¹⁴⁸ in both of which the blood is not sprinkled directly on the altar (since these rituals, which involve impurity, cannot be held inside the temple), but is nonetheless flicked seven times in the direction of the Holy of Holies. This correspondence with other biblical purificatory rites evidently resonated so deeply for the rabbis, that in *m. Pesah*. 9:5 the verbal noun used to denote the application of blood to the doorframes in Egypt is “sprinkling” (הזיה). Even though “sprinkling” is not at all the appropriate description for the smearing or brushing of doorframes with blood, we see an active attempt on the side of the rabbis to construe the treatment of blood in the *pesah* of Egypt as subject to the same ritual logic as other similar rites – thereby, implicitly turning it into a rite of purification. The implicit dimension of the *pesah* as a form of *hattat*, which we have seen implied in both Josephus and John, again emerges – indeed controversially – in the rabbinic debates, not only on the “*pesah* of Egypt” but also on “the *pesah* of the generations.”

Conclusion

The critical survey of ancient Hebrew and Greek literature about the *pesah*, presenting it or invoking it, illustrates how completely the *pesah* foils the attempt to write its history as a reenactment, but also how it generated a long and rich history of creative thought around itself. It forces a search for ritual meaning to distinguish between actual events and textual discourse, between the originality of an instantiation in a performance-chain and the discourse that serially asserts a single original moment and an authentic essence.

Source-critical analysis of the earliest materials, in a narrative that presents the deity creating the *pesah* and prescribing its configuration, turns up a core with an incomplete depiction only partially connected to the narrative, the ambiguity of which invites assimilation to any of several different concepts and categories. Direct additions to that core rounded out the depiction, connected it to the narrative, and had the deity determine what future performance should look like and mean, but their terms recapitulate those in the episode or elsewhere in the narrative, the results create confusion and even contradict each other, they alternate between reifying conceptions rather than coalesce and progress, and the historian, whether of ritual or of literature, is diverted further from a *pesah* as a stable tradition of practice or literary imagination. Additions elsewhere in the narrative further the processes, extending some concepts, minimizing others, introducing new ones, and compounding the overall confusion. Each prioritizes aspects of the foundation-episode and

147 *m. Parah* 3:9.

148 *m. Neg.* 14:10; *Sipra Mešora* 3.3.8 (ed. Weiss, 72a).

aspects of the larger narrative differently; together they make up an expanding matrix of configurations. Separate literary works that depict subsequent *pesah* performance, discuss its original character and meaning, or trace its enduring features and significance, engage either in selective re-presentation or in hermeneutical synthesis, with each set of choices yielding new configurations and growing the matrix further.

The crucial component; the purpose and mood; the site; the uniqueness or replicability of the first instance; the categorization, namely, the degree of assimilation to other operative phenomena and concepts; and the deeper significance – all these aspects of the *pesah* and more are considered and realized in alternate, mutually exclusive ways. With varying degrees of clarity and directness, the different choices reflect ideas being contested or advanced in the particular circumstances of each author or editor. And it is only by surveying a fuller range of literary works, which includes the foundational texts of the different communities to have emerged from Israel-Judea and to have crystalized around its legacy of ideas, practices and literature, that one can fully appreciate the challenge posed and the richness offered.

Through this study, we hope to have shown the wealth, creativity, and complexity of biblical and post-biblical writing about the *pesah*, a theme that is often perceived to be so mythically and ritually central that it is wrongfully taken to be simple and straightforward. We also hope, however, to have made broader methodological interventions that extend beyond this project. First, our aim was to demonstrate that texts about rituals are texts and not rituals: any attempt to tease out information about historical modes of ritual performance from ancient texts must therefore be hyper-cognizant of the interpretive layers and interconnections within those texts. Second, just as ritual is a textual construction, so are metaphysical concepts such as memory and continuity. Those who claim continuity with the Bible's Israelites do not remember the exodus and its related events as such (nor, for that matter, any other event of historical magnitude, real or imagined); rather, they produce, maintain and activate textual accounts that generate certain practices as commemoration, without agreeing on what exactly is commemorated and how. Collective memory, at least in what pertains to ancient texts, is thus not an observable phenomenon but a carefully created literary trope. Finally, our study advocates for collaboration between scholars who work in different fields and within different disciplines, and shows that the fruits of such collaboration stand to challenge existing paradigms and open new perspectives.